O. 14. 64.

A

# DISCOURSE

Concerning the

# PERIOD

OF

# Humane LIFE:

Whether

*Mutable* or *Immutable*.

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*The Third Edition Corrected.*

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By the Author of *The Duty of Man*, laid down in expreſs words of Scriptures.

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*LONDON*,

Printed, and are to be ſold by *Hen. Bonwicke*, at the *Red Lion* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard. 1678.

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# To the Honourable *Colledge* of *Phyſitians* at *London.*

Generous Gentlemen,

THat I preſume to preſix your great Name to ſo mean a Book, proceeds not from any confidence I have of its value; but from the nature of the Diſcourſe, which your excellent Profeſſion is ſo much concerned in. For I muſt ſay, that ſince I could

*stand the* Debate, I *have thought their opinion, who maintain the* Period *of every mans* Life *to be unalterably fixed by an absolute* Decree, *does endanger your* Profession *so much, that the truth is, if it be true, you may seek out some new* World *for your* Practice; *for here you should be only like the* Idol Gods, *who could neither do good nor evil.*

*This the excellent* Jo. Beverovicius *did prudently*

*prudently foreſee, and partly endeavored to ſatisfy both himſelf and others, by asking the advice of the learned men of his age.*

*But that the* Period of Humane Life *may be both extended & ſhortned, common experience does ſufficiently atteſt, how many have been hurried to their Graves by the unskilfulneſs of* Empericks, *and are there not multitudes alſo that*

*can witneſs, you have been (under God) the cauſe their Lives have been prolonged.*

Gentlemen, *I know you can expect no Panagyrick from ſuch an unfit perſon as I acknowledge my ſelf to be. And methinks I alſo here all men ſay, that that is a buſineſs only for a* Homer *to perform. If the meanneſs of this Preſent be cenſured by ſome, yet I know you are more generous,*

*nerous, eſpecially ſince the beſtowing of a more valuable and ſignal evidence of reſpect, is only impeded by the inability of,*

Honored Gentlemen

Your moſt devoted

Servant.

# THE PREFACE.

Reader,

THE *following Discourse is of so small bulk, that a* Preface *may seem as needless and rediculous as an* Index. *In some few hours it may be perused, and then both the design of the Author, and of the Book may be known. It may be thou desirest to know what was the occasion of the following Discourse. But I know not if I be obliged to answer this and such like idle questions; yet to satisfie thy curiosity, know, that the Author was unhappily engaged to converse with a Society of men, who frequently debated this and such like queries; and mostly he was opposed by the greater part, as maintaining an unreasonable position. Whether their charge be true or false, is a thing better determined by others unconterned, than either by them or me. I know*

*know very well their clamorous calumnies and reproaches, which ſince I cannot ſhun, I ſhall endeavor to ſlight, as indeed unworthy to be regarded.*

*If men of good conſideration diſlike any thing in the Diſcourſe, I promiſe them, upon Information, I ſhall either endeavor to ſatisfie them, or to reſt ſatisfied with what they ſay. Nay further, if there be any Line in it inconſiſtent with Piety and Religion, freely reject it; for I perſwade thee. (if the Author knew any ſuch) he world burn the Book for its ſake.*

*But I hope upon trial there ſhall be found no harſh notion in it to offend the moſt ſqueamiſh conſcience. For the opinion I have rejected is, in my judgment inconſiſtent with the Divine Goodneſs and Holineſs, repugnant to the freedom of Humane Nature, and deſtructive of all lawful means for the preſervation of a mans life. While as that ſentiment I embrace, begets in mens minds, noble and generous conceptions to promote real Piety and Religion, and intemperance; upon the account that Piety is the meanes to prolong our lives, and wickedneſs the cauſe of our ſhort lives. And that this is no cheat or deluſion, the wiſeſt of men hath left upon record,* Pro. 11. 10.

19. As righteouſneſs tendeth to Life, ſo he that purſueth evil, purſueth it to his own death. *This brings to my memory the Pſalmiſts advice, with which I ſhall conclude*; What man is he that deſireth life, and loveth many days, that he may ſee good? Keep thy Tongue from evil, and thy Lips from ſpeaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good. Seek peace, and purſue it. But the wicked and deceitful man ſhall not live out half his days.

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OF

# OF THE PERIOD OF Humane Life

JOB 14. 5, 6.

*Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou haſt appointed his bounds that he cannot paſs.*

*Turn from him that he may reſt, till he ſhall accompliſh, as an hireling, his day.*

THis excellent Book of *Job* repreſents to us a plain and unqueſtionable inſtance of the various ſucceſſes all Humane actions are liable to, and of the promiſcuous adminiſtration of Divine Providence to particular perſons.

ſons. Here we may read of *Job*'s happy and flouriſhing condition, that *he was the greateſt of all the men of the Eaſt*; and of his low and afflicted ſtate, poor even to a Proverb, and in a condition that only pleaded pity and compaſſion; and how again *the Lord bleſſed the latter end of* Job *more than his beginning*.

From this various adminiſtration of Providence, men have taken occaſion to make divers inferences. The ſcoffing Atheiſt hath from thence wickedly concluded, that God hath no care of Humane Affairs. If God (ſay theſe ſcoffers) had any care of this World, he would never ſuffer thoſe men who have corrupted their ways by Treachery and Deceit, to proſper and enjoy an affluence of all worldly delights; whereas the vertuous and godly man, who takes heed to his ways, leſt he ſin, and who throughout the whole courſe

courſe of his life hath carefully ſtudied to *keep a conſcience void of offence towards God and Man*, is notwithſtanding *a man of ſorrow, and acquainted with grief*; as *plagued all the day long, and chaſtened every Morning, and hath Waters of a full Cup wrung out to him.* If God (ſay they) concerned himſelf with Humane Affairs, he would never ſuffer *the Tabernacles of Robbers to proſper*, and the Houſe of the Upright to be ruined and deſtroyed.

This is without all contradiction a great ſtumbling-block and offence to the Blind Atheiſt; and hath even been a ſad trial to the beſt of Gods people. *Wherefore does the way of the wicked proſper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very Treacherouſly?* Was a queſtion *Jeremy* could hardly at firſt reſolve. And we find *Job* and the Prophet *Habakkuk* very much puzled with it; and the *Pſalmiſt*

*pſalmiſt* plainly confeſſeth, that *his feet were almoſt gone*, and that *his ſteps had well nigh ſlipt, when he ſaw the proſperity of the wicked*, Pſal. 73.

To ſee bad men proſpering in their wicked purpoſes and undertakings, and good men unſucceſsful and fruſtrated in their juſt attempts, has been none of the leaſt Topicks the *Epicurean* Atheiſts have made uſe of, in their exempting this World from the Divine Rule and Dominion. It was this ſingle conſideration that made *Cato* (who was once a Preacher of Providence; how Orthodox, I enquire not) accuſe the Dominion and Government of the gods, of inſtability and unjuſtneſs, that *Cæſar* who tyrannically invaded the Rights of the Commonwealth of *Rome*, ſhould be ſucceſsful in ſo unjuſt attempts; and *Pompey* put to the worſt, and overthrown in the lawful defence of his Coun-

try:

try: this ſtumbled him exceedingly. 'Tis true, ſome few of the Learned and Sober Heathens did not thus raſhly fall foul upon Providence; but very wiſely inferred the being of a future State, where the vertuous ſhall be rewarded, and the vitious puniſhed. And thoſe Holy men in Scripture, who did *fret becauſe of the proſperity of the wicked*, quickly perceived their folly and error, and that the wicked were only fed like Sheep for the Slaughter; and as the Poet excellently expreſſeth it, *tolluntur in altum ut lapſu graviore ruant.*

*Job's* Friends, though they did not directly fall foul upon the Divine Providence, yet it is evident they were of opinion, that God would never have afflicted *Job* with ſuch ſad calamities, if he had been upright and ſincere. *Remember* (ſaith *Elipha z*) *who ever periſhed being innocent? Or where*

*where were the Righteous cut off?* ch. 4. 7. *Bildad* tells *Job*, *If thou wert pure and upright, ſurely now he would awake for thee*, ch. 8. 6. To both theſe *Zophar* ſucceeds with a charge as grievous and bitter, *For thou haſt ſaid my Doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes: But O that God would ſpeak, and open his lips againſt thee*, ch. 11. v. 4, 5.

Theſe were the Cordials *Job*'s Friends afforded him, while as his afflicted condition pleaded pity from his Friends. Theſe accuſations were heavy; but he ſaw it was needleſs to tell them, that God might deſtroy the perfect as well as the wicked; and although he would not plead *not guilty*, for then he confeſſeth *his own lips ſhould prove him perverſe*; yet he humbly conceived, that it was a dangerous principle to conclude love or hatred from any ſuch outward diſpenſation

There-

Therefore finding all his intreaties rejected, and his plea's for his own defence ſlighted; he is at length forced to beg their ſilence, deſiring far rather to plead his cauſe with his Maker, who could diſcern his ſincerity; and therefore having ordered his cauſe, *ch.* 13. 18. and taken an exact and accurate examination of his former ways, he begins his pleadings for a mitigation of his preſent calamity, from *v.* 23. which he continues till interrupted by *Eliphas*, ch. 15. and amongſt the many arguments he urgeth, that taken from the determined days, and unpaſſable bounds prefixed to men, is not the ſmalleſt: *Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou haſt appointed his bounds, that he cannnot paſs. Turn from him that he may reſt, till he ſhall accompliſh as an hireling his day.*

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Theſe words being the ground of the following Diſcourſe, it is but reaſonable I ſhould ſpend a little time in their explanation,

*Seeing his days are determined*, &c. The word which our Tranſlators render *ſeeing*, is in the Original אִם *if*, which ſome Expoſitors think is uſed by way of quæry, thus; *If his days be determined?* But the Context ſeems to warrant our Vulgar Tranſlation, and there is no doubt, but it is very emphatick; for it contains an implicit affirmation, a phraſe very ordinary, when the thing for its certainty is confeſſed and acknowledged. But let us ſuppoſe that the words ſhould be rendred by way of quæry, yet there are two doubts that muſt be removed, elſe their quarrelling with our Tranſlation is vain and impertinent. 1. It ſeems to be very evident, that it has then been a received opinion, that the days

of men are determined; elſe *Job* had never made uſe of this argument, in his pleadings for a ceſſation from trouble. 2. If *Job* had indeed doubted, that mans days were *determined*, it was no wiſe nor rational plea, eſpecially ſince he was pleading with God, who knew whether it were ſo or not; and ſince he might have made uſe of indubitable Topicks. But I paſs by this debate as trivial.

*His days*, &c, It is debated by ſome, why *Job* makes uſe of the third perſon, and not of the firſt. The reaſon ſome give is this, becauſe the third perſon uſed for the firſt, denotes contempt and modeſty; and therefore *Job* in his low ſtate is pleaſed thus to abaſe himſelf, eſpecially ſince pleading with his Maker. But this conjecture is not fully ſatisfactory, for *Job* in ſeveral of his other pleas, makes uſe of the firſt perſon; which methinks he would not

have done if he had made uſe of the third perſon upon the account of the former conſideration; therefore from the promiſcuous uſurpation of the perſons, we may eaſily conjecture, that when the argument he brings does in a more peculiar manner reach his own private condition, then he makes uſe of the firſt perſon: an inſtance of this we have *ch.* 13. 23, 24. *&c.* But now this argument taken from the determined days, and unpaſſable bounds ſet to men, is a general one, which all men as well as he might plead; therefore he ſpeaketh in the third perſon, yet always eying his own condition. The like inſtance we find in the beginning of this Chapter, *Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble.* Here he ſpeaks in the third perſon, and not in the firſt; for to be of *few days* and *full of trouble*, is the character of every man.

*Few*

*Few and evil* (ſays *Jacob* to *Pharaoh*) *have the days of the years of my life been*, Gen. 47, 9.

*Are determined*, &c. This word in the Original properly ſignifieth to *dig* or *cut thorow*; here it is to be underſtood metaphorically; becauſe God doth as exactly know the number of mens days, as if the moſt accurate ſearch were made. 'Tis true, in all humane determinations, it is reaſonable that conſultation precede. Some ſpace muſt intervene betwixt their knowing of a thing, and their determinations about it. I confeſs, it is diſputed, whether the Humane Will be of it ſelf a knowing faculty? or if it muſt follow in its choice the dictates of the intellect? I will not diſpute this now; but there is truth in that general Maxim, *ignoti nulla cupido.* But to fancy that there is any ſuch priority between the Divine knowledg and volition, is a groſs miſtake, irreconcilable with

the Infinite and Eternal perfections of God: who *uno actu & ictu*, (as they ſpeak) comprehendeth and willeth all future Events.

*The number of his Months are with thee, &c.* This phraſe holds out theſe two things: *Firſt*, the Exactneſs and Infiniteneſs of the Divine knowledg; and *Secondly* the Divine rule and dominion. *Firſt*, it holds out the Divine knowledg to be Infinite and Exact, *The number of his months are with thee.* That is thou art a God whoſe knowledg reacheth the ſmalleſt portion of our time, even to months and days; thou alone knoweſt all thoſe circumſtances; and to know the particular portion of days allowed to every man, does certainly require an infinite and exact knowledge. I will not curiouſly enquire, what truth there is in the pretended diabolical predictions of future Events; and whether Star-gazers from the Con-

junctions

junctions, and contrary Aſpects Of Cœleſtial Bodies, can foretell the future number of the days and months of terreſtrial and inferior Sublunary beings: a paſſing view of this I will have occaſion to take afterwards; at preſent we reſt ſatisfied with this, that an exact and comprehenſive knowledg of our days and months is only the prerogative of him who holds our lives in being; the pretended knowledg any Creature boaſteth of, is conjectural and uncertain, if not (as frequently it is) fictitious, unleſs when the Divine wiſdom for ſome ſecret, and to us unknown ends, reveals to his creatures ſuch future Events. But *Secondly*, the Phraſe holds out the Divine Rule and dominion; *The number of his months are with thee*: that is, they are in thy power, thou may'ſt either prolong or ſhorten the days of Men: and I think the meaning of this whole

verſe is comprehended under theſe two heads, which I ſhall afterwards diſcourſe of at more length.

*Thou haſt appointed his bounds*, &c. It is not Fate or Fortune, but the wiſe God who appoints to every Man his time. Now the bounds ſet to Men may be conſidered under a two-fold notion. *Firſt*, As it ſignifies that common and ordinary Period which the God of Nature has ſetled, which Men by the common courſe of Nature may fulfil, if no adcidental circumſtance hinder: and it ſeems the Pſalmiſt only underſtands this common term of Humane Life, *Pſal.* 90. 10. *The days of our years are threeſcore years and Ten, and if by reaſon of ſtrength they be fourſcore*; &c. or *Secondly*, It may be underſtood in a more ſtrict ſence, as it is taken for the laſt moment of every individual and particular perſon; and of both theſe I ſhall more fully diſcourſe

afterwards and ſhow, that the words ſeem to refer to the common term of Humane Life; or if they mean this perticular term, in what ſenſe they are to be underſtood, *determined*, *appointed*, &c.

Theſe and ſuch like condeſcending Phraſes, have been moſt unhappily uſed, and ſadly miſunderſtood in the Schools. Some men no ſooner read in Scripture of Gods determining or appointing, but they inſtantly conclude a phyſical previous neceſſitating act, which inevitably and irreſiſtibly determines Men: and this kind of determination they plead for in all caſes; ſo that Men even in their vitious actions are irreſiſtibly determined to do ſo. I know no opinion which has rendred the reformed Church more odious than this: would to God I could ſay the Cenſure is cauſeleſs, and that I were forced to apologize, for ſaying our Divines have erred

erred in this caſe. But alas the opinion is grown ſtrong, and not long ſince it was not much leſs than Hereſie to condemn it: and even to this day it is the ſtudy of ſome Teachers, to inſtill it into the hearts of their Hearers. For the correcting of this ſowre opinion, I ſhall have occaſion to add ſome things in this following diſcourſe; now I ſhall deſire it to be conſidered, that while we ſpeak of the Divine determinations, appointment, &c. we ſpeak of things our knowledg cannot reach, the beſt conceptions we can frame to our ſelves of the Divine volitions, are dangerous and imperfect; our capacities in this lapſed ſtate are more narrow than we are aware of: and although they were raiſed to a higher pitch, yet we can never comprehend his way of working, who in all his ways is unſearchable. 'Tis truly ſad to ſee the contending World ſo ſeri

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ous and reſtleſs in digging thoſe deeps that are unfathomable; it were to be wiſhed that Men did not found their pretended knowledg of the Divine volitions, on the baſis of their own ſilly volitions, and did not argue from what we find in our ſelves to be the ſame in God. 'Tis true the Holy Spirit hath condeſcended to expreſs things ſuitable to our Underſtanding and mean capacities, therefore we read in Scripture of the Divine determinations, appointments, *&c.* but yet to abuſe ſuch condeſcending expreſſions, and to imagine that there were really ſuch purpoſes, and volitions in God as theſe we perceive in our ſelves, this were a heinous crime, pray let us ſatisfie our ſelves with this, that God in an eminent and tranſcending manner doth theſe things, which we cannot do without willing, decreeing, *&c.*

*That*

*That he cannot paſs*, or as others render it, *and he ſhall not paſs*, which Phraſe is not to be underſtood, as if the particular Period of every Mans life were ſo fatally fixed, that he can neither ſhorten nor prolong it; for this is contrary to many clear Texts of Scripture, as ſhall afterwards fully appear: but by this Phraſe, we are to underſtand the common term of Humane Life, which is not ſo mutable as the particular, nor yet altogether ſo that it cannot be altered; for God has ſtill reſerved in his own power the ſhortening and prolonging of it. And further, we muſt not apprehend that the particular terms of Humane Beings are ſo mutable, that God knows them not, and cannot foretel the preciſe Period of every Mans Life, or that the Divine Counſel concerning things Future is mutable; no ſure, God has declared the contrary. *I am God*,

*God and there is none like me,* (ſaith the Almighty) *declaring the End from the Beginning, and from ancient time the things that are not yet done; ſaying, my Counſel muſt ſtand, and I will do all my pleaſure, Iſa.* 46. 9. Two things there be which occaſion men to change their purpoſes and reſolutions. 1. Their want of Power to execute them, 2. Their finite and ſhallow Knowledg, which cannot foreſee thoſe future circumſtances which render their Deſigns ineffectual. But now there is no difficulty that can poſe the Almighty; *with him all things are poſſible*: it is the Prophets argument, *the Lord of hoſts hath purpoſed, who ſhall diſanull it? his hand is ſtretched out, and who ſhall turn it back? Iſa.* 24. 17. And further there is no circumſtance or condition that lyes in the dark, and unſeen to him, whoſe knowledg is infinite, and who equally com-

comprehends things paſt, preſent and to come. Therefore is it that man cannot paſs theſe bounds perfixed by the Divine foreknowledg: But of this afterwards.

*Turn from him*, &c It is quæried whether *Job* here petitioneth a withdrawing of Gods ſupporting preſence, and a ceſſation by death, or a ceſſation from the affliction and trouble he lay under. There be Three things that plead for the former Interpretation. 1. Becauſe the word חדל placed abſolutly, ſignifieth to ceaſe by death, 1 *Sam.* 2. 5. *and they that were hungry ceaſed, i. e.* died. 2. Becauſe the ſupporting hand of Providence being removed, men return to the Duſt. *Thou hideſt thy face, they are troubled, thou takeſt away their Breath, they dye, and return to their Duſt, Pſal.* 104. 29. 3. It is not inconſiſtent with *Jobs* former deſires, *Chap.* 3. and 6. *why died I not from*

*from the Womb? Why did I not give up the Ghoſt when I came out of the Belly? For now ſhould I have leen* [*ſtill*] *and been* [*quiet;*] *I ſhould have* [*ſlept,*] *then had I been at* [*reſt:*] *O that I might have my requeſt, even that it would pleaſe God to deſtroy me!*

That the Phraſe can never admit the former gloſs evidently appears from the words immediately following, for if *Job* had been pleading for death, why is that reaſon added, *that he might accompliſh his day*? It is only then a ceſſation from his grievous affliction that he ſo earneſtly intreated; as if he had ſaid, Lord, thy afflicting hand is heavy, and what am I but weak Duſt, not able to bear thy heavy Chaſtiſments? my Soul is overburdened with grief; and wilt thou ſet thy terrors before me to affright me? hath not poor man in this lapſed ſtate, Troops of miſeries attending him

him, from which he may expect no freedom till Mortality be ſwallowed up in Life? And are not his few days labour and ſorrow, pain and affliction? And wilt thou to thoſe inſeparable evils, ſuperadd a burthen of pain more grievous and inſufferable? O do not meaſure out ſo diſmal a Condition to thy ſilly Creature! Make me not the object of thy direful vengeance, but in the midſt of wrath remember Mercy. Art thou not Goodneſs it ſelf, and far more compaſſionate than the moſt tender parent? And ſhall it be ſaid thou haſt meaſured out ſo acute torments to vex thy poor Creature? I confeſs Perfection is not the thing I plead; yet may not I ſay, it is not for my iniquity, nor for my ſin, that thou haſt afflicted me? And let this Conſideration alſo prevail with thee, that my untender friends ſadly miſtake thy deſign in afflicting me; they conclude

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It is for ſome ſecret heinous crime, that thy judgements are upon me: O that thou wouldſt turn from thy wrath, that I may enjoy ſome reſt before I go whence I ſhall not return?

This phraſe *turn from him* is ſometimes taken in a very bad ſenſe. Thus we find the wicked ſadly characterized, as a people who deſire God to depart from them, but as it is uttered by the people of God under the preſſure of afflictions, it implies no more but a ſerious deſire that God would be pleaſed to remove that burden. Now in ſuch innocent petitions there appeareth no crime, for it is certain, that afflictions *ſimply* conſidered, are grievous even to the beſt of Mankind: *there is no affliction* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *for the preſent that is joyous, but grievous.* 'Tis true, impatience under affliction is an exceſs which no excuſe whatſo-

ever can pardon: there are ſome perſons of ſuch haſty complexions, that they riſe in paſſion againſt God if they meet with the leaſt affliction; juſt like that wretched man who ſaid, *this evil is of the Lord, why ſhould we wait any longer upon him?* But thoſe petitions of the Faithful in holy writ, although at the firſt view they ſeem to be peremptory and abſolute, yet they are truly qualified and ſubmiſſive; and at the moſt, only expreſs the harmleſs reſentments of innocent nature, that cannot but expreſs how contrary afflictions are to it.

*That he may reſt; ut quieſcat ſc. paululum*, that his affliction being removed, he may yet enjoy a little ſpace to ſolace himſelf, till he accompliſh his day. I will purpoſely decline the anſwer of that querie, Whether it is lawful to wiſh death when our condition is charged with a ſurplulage of calamity;

amity; for the brevity I design will not suffer me to survey the difficulties of that case, only in the general I shall add two things. 1. If the affliction be violent, fierce, and seemingly durable, rendering us uncapable of exercising any duty; I question not but common reason will suggest to every sober man, that in that case Death is more eligible than Life. Yet 2. since we are ignorant what God designs to us, by sending us such afflictions, it is our part to submit to the Lords will, and say, *Good is the will of the Lord.* Thus, although we may comparatively and submissively wish Death upon the account of some acute trials, yet it is never lawful to be peremptory and absolute in such desires; for frequently the happy event makes men conclude that *it was good for them they were afflicted.*

*Rest, &c.* Methinks the very sound of this word is full of ra-

viſhing ſweetneſs and pleaſure, and yet to thoſe who are ſtated in a condition of woe and Miſery, it is bitter and harſh; as the moſt raviſhing and pleaſant Muſick is in the Ear of him who is ſad: thoſe who never taſted the honey-comb, know not its ſweetneſs: the men who have been always drudges and ſlaves, have no diſcerning what Liberty is; and thoſe who from their birth have been accuſtomed to pain, know not their miſery ſo ſenſibly. But to have once enjoyed bleſſings, and on a ſudden to be deprived of them not only the unexpected change, but alſo their former happineſs adds to their miſery, and makes their condition more unſufferable. If man had been created to toil and labor, *his eating of bread in the ſweat of his face*, had been no curſe: but to have been placed in a bleſſed and happy ſtate, and by his folly to be hurled into a

ſtate

ſtate of miſery and pain, that compleats his calamity, and makes him ſenſible, how miſerable a thing it is to have been happy.

This ſingle conſideration ſeems to add very much to *Jobs* miſery, his condition was once more than ordinary happy; and the amiſſion of the comforts he formerly enjoyed, makes him pathetically cry out, *O that I were as in months paſt, as in the days when God preſerved me; but now* (as he ſadly complains) *they that are younger than I, have me in deriſion.*

If *Job* in this ſtate of woe had been perſwaded of the certain change of his condition, *and that his latter end ſhould be more bleſſed than his beginning*, the expected hopes of this had ſerved to allay and mitigate his ſorrow, and to render his caſe more ſufferable and eaſie. It is the hopes of reſt, that puts ſtrength in the wearied

traveller; it was the expected reward and assurance of a future blessedness and better resurrection, which made those Worthies, *Heb.* 11. so cheerfully undergo suffering. What the happiness of the Saints rest is, I am not able to represent, it being so far above any thing we can in this imperfect state conceive or imagine. The advantages that attend our present tranquility and rest, are many and great, which to enumerate would be prolix and tedious: but if from that, we should frame to our selves an *Idea* of that Celestial Rest, how imperfect would it be? any Rest we injoy here, is uncertain: an unthought-of causality may impair it, but the Rest that remains for the people of God is everlasting, there is no fear of losing it: Heaven is a place free from trouble, and there is nothing that can imbitter that pleasant state.

Phi-

Philoſophers have a ſaying *that the end of Motion is Reſt* this is indeed true of all thoſe motions and trials the ſervants of God meet with; the way to the Kingdom is ſpread over with thiſtles; *thorow many tribulations we muſt enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: but thoſe Waves of affliction will quickly over; and when the day breaks, theſe ſhadows will flee away. This Winter will ſoon be paſt, and *the ſinging of the Birds will come*; and Chriſtians, who by faith and patience continue in well-doing, ſhall ere be long be placed in thoſe manſions of Reſt, that are in *Emanuels* land.

Alas, how inſenſible do we remain under the enjoyment of our outward comforts! when we are bleſſed with food, liberty, and health, we are but ſenſibly ſtupid and ignorant, what is the value of thoſe mercies: but if hunger and

want begin to pinch us, if our former liberty be hedged in, if ſickneſs and pain ſeize upon us, then we begin to gather ſome ſenſe, and we accuſe our ſelves for our ingratitude to God:

*Till he ſhall accompliſh as an Hireling his day*: for the better underſtanding of this ſimilitude, I ſhall in four particulars compare the days of man with the days of an Hireling, and in each of them make application to *Jobs* caſe. 1. The days of an Hireling, denotes a time ſet, prefixed and limited for the performance of ſome particular piece of ſervice; and are not the days of man alſo allotted him for to do his maſters buſineſs? We were not born to be idle and negligent, ſure God had ſome greater deſign in the Creation of man than this: now this particular quadrates very well with *Jobs* caſe, and ſeems to make the meaning of *Jobs* words

to

to run thus; Lord, thou haſt given me a being, and appointed me a work to accompliſh: but alas while I am thus excruciated with horror and pain, I am unfitted for thy ſervice, the ſurpluſage of miſery meaſured out to me, diſinables me to go about thy work, be entreated therefore O merciful Father to turn from thy diſpleaſure, remove the preſent heavy calamity I am overburdened with; that I may yet accompliſh the remainder of my time in thy work and ſervice. 2. This ſet and fixed day of the Hireling is full of pain, labour and toil; he is (poor wretch) both late and early at work, and ſeldom has he any intervalls of reſt, unleſs his Maſter be more than ordinary gentle and benign; and when he has thus indulged a little eaſe, he muſt not with the ſluggard ſay, *O ſi hoc eſſet laborare*, he muſt to his work again, for upon this depends his pay-

payment; no wages is the reſult of not working; and in ſome caſes ſtripes and whipping is the fruit of negligence. And what is Mans Life? At the beſt ſtate it is but ſorrow and trouble, till mortality be ſwallowed up in Life. Our pleaſures (upon which we put the higheſt value) are either purchaſed, or accompanied with pain and labor. If we be in a proſperous ſtate, our minds are either diſtracted with care to make it more proſperous; or with fears puzled and perplexed, leſt it be overclouded; and if we be in a low and adverſe ſtate, we grieve and repine; nay knowledg, the moſt excellent of earthly pleaſures, is yet in the judgment of the wiſeſt of men, but vexation of ſpirit; *For in much Wiſdom there is much Grief, and he that encreaſeth Knowledg encreaſeth Sorrow.* The life of Man is not unfitly compared to *Ezekiels* Roll, which was

full

full of woes. If one misery or woe passeth, behold another cometh, as one Wave succeeds another. And by all these calamites we may learn what an evil Sin is, the fruit of which are all those calamities we meet with; *in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy Bread till thou return unto the Ground.* And upon this account *Job* may be supposed to plead with God thus; Lord, is not my time at best but lamentable and miserable? And wilt thou superadd to this inevitable misery, a surplusage of pain and affliction? O deal kindly with thy servant who is devoted to thy fear; *Turn from me that I may rest till I shall accomplish as an Hireling my day. Thirdly*, True it is that the Hirelings day is but Labor and Pain; yet the brevity and shortness thereof makes him regard it the less. It is but a day, and that will quickly be over and gone; and what

what is the Life of Man? It is but as a hand-breath of a ſmall extenſion; or like to a paſſing ſhadow, which we ſcarce ſooner perceive than it vaniſheth. *Man that is Born of a woman is of few days, he cometh forth like a Flower and is cut down:* his decaying is within ſome few minutes of his budding; as the Poet ſpeaketh of Roſes, *& dum naſcuntur conſenuiſſe Roſas.* Now from this reaſon *Job* may be ſuppoſed to argue thus; Lord, thou knoweſt how frail and brittle I am, and if thou contend thus with me, how quickly ſhall I return to the Duſt, I Beſeech thee conſider that my time is however but ſhort, and let thy goodneſs appear in removing thy ſtroke away from me, for I am conſumed by the blow of thine hand; *O ſpare me that I may recover ſtrenght before I go hence, and be no more.* *Fourthly*, The Reſt and Wages the Hireling expecteth, makes

makes the accompliſhing of his day more eaſie and tolerable. The word rendred accompliſh, ſignifieth to will and delight in a thing earneſtly; *donec optata veniat dies.* 'Tis a day wiſhed and longed for, and much delighted in when it comes. And indeed the ſtrength of the compariſon ſeems to lye in this, which makes the meaning of *Jobs* words to be this; Lord, now my trouble and pain excruciats and torments me, and my life is more wearisome to me, than the Hirelings day can be to him; therefore turn away thy wrath from me, that in the finiſhing of my courſe I may be as jovial and cheerful, as the Hireling is when his day is accompliſhed: and thus I have done with the Explanation of theſe words.

The next thing I deſigned in this undertaking, is to enquire how the days of every Mans Life may be ſaid to be determined; and whe-

whether the Period of every Mans Life were ſo fixed and bounded, that by his care, good managery and uſe of the means, it cannot be extended; nor ſhortned by his negligence, intemperance, or expoſing of himſelf to the Famine. Sword, or Plague, it is very certain from this plain Text of Scripture, that the days of every Mans Life are determined; but the manner how, is left unexplained: and this we do not learn from Scripture. And it were to be wiſhed that our curioſity would forbear any enquiry into things that are hid: but alas our inclinations are ſo wicked and preverſe, that *nitimur in vetitum*, we are always bent and eager in our enquiries after things of a myſterious alloy; and God knows how miſerably ſome men have miſtaken in their enquiries after a ſolution of the preſent doubt: and if I could promiſe to my ſelf to rectifie thoſe huge

huge miſtakes ſome men have fallen into, this would be a ſufficient juſtification of my preſent undertaking,

But in order to the unfolding of this doubt, I ſhall promiſe four things which will contribute to the better underſtanding of it.

*Firſt*, There is no doubt that every Mans Life hath a Period. *It is appointed for all men once to dye*; this is a warfare from which there is no diſcharge: *What Man is he that liveth and ſhall not ſee Death*? As to this the Prince and Peaſant ſtand upon even terms, and as the wiſe man tells us, the rich and poor meet together: there is no juſtling in the Grave for precedency. I confeſs it were not worth the pains to conſider the trivial inſtances, taken from the Tranſlation to *Enoch* and *Elias*, to infringe this poſition, For firſt, we are not to debate what God may do, he has a Soveraignty over his

his Creatures, and muſt not be called to give a reaſon of his actions; all whoſe ways are tracts of wiſdom and goodneſs. *Secondly*, We know nothing of the manner of their Tranſlation: he who will poſitively ſay, that they did not undergo that which is equivalent to death, will ſay more than he can prove. I am apt to believe that no ſober man will ſay, that they entred their Heavenly Habitation with their unrefined bodies; no more than thoſe who riſe at the ſound of the laſt Trumpet, in the twinkling of an eye, are carried into Heaven without any change.

*Secondly*, It is alſo unqueſtionable, that Sin introduced this Period to every Mans Life; the primitive threatning runs thus, *in the day thou eateſt thou ſhalt dye.* And the Apoſtle hath as plainly expreſt it as it can be, *Wherefore as by one Man Sin entred into the World, and Death by Sin, and ſo Death*

*Death paſſed upon all Men for that all have ſinned, Rom.* 4. 12. where it is plain, that Death is a puniſhment inflicted for Sin, ſo that if man had never ſinned, we have no reaſon ro think he ſhould have died I confeſs without Revelation, we could never have gueſſed this to be the cauſe of Death. The Heathen Philoſophers were exceedingly confuſed in their notions concerning the origine of Sin, and the cauſe of Death: many of them thought that Death was a natural accident, originally appurtenant to Humane Nature. And indeed if Revelation had not declared the contrary, I had been fully ſatisfied, that Death had been no other thing but ſuch a natural accident; but it is ſtrange that any man that has converſed with ſacred writ, ſhould be of this opinion, And yet we find, the *Pelagians* of old were great ſticklers for it: hence is it that the an-

cient Fathers and Councils have condemned it with a Curſe. In the *Milevitan* Conncil *Can.* 2. we read thus, *placuit, ut quicunque dicit*, Adam *primum hominem mortalem factum, ita ut ſive peccaret, ſive non peccaret, moreretur in corpore, hoc eſt, de corpore exiret, non peccati merito ſed neceſſitate naturæ, anathema ſit.* In after-ages the *Scotiſts* (the moſt ſubtil of all Scholaſtick writers) inclined much to this opinion, againſt whom the *Thomiſts* (their irreconcilable Enemies) took up the cudgels: amongſt modern writers the ſeemingly rational *Socinians*, have owned this groundleſs conceit. But I cannot ſtay to debate this at length, only in brief, if Death had been natural to man in the ſtate of Innocency, it behoved to have been becauſe of theſe following reaſons.

1. Becauſe *Adams* natural conſtitution implied mortality; the Materials of his conſtitution were not

not ſo amicable as to entertain a laſting amity and friendſhip. 2. It was the primitive precept, *be fruitful and multiply*: now it is plain that procreation includes mortality in its notion; and farther it ſeems to be unconceivable how this little Map of Earth ſhould have contained a numerous multiplying and never dying offſpring. 3. Humane Nature in the ſtate of Innocency did ſtand in need of Meat and Drink, as is plain from *Gen.* 1. 19. now the end of eating and drinking is not only to hold up, but to repair the decays of our Bodies, which would ſudenly return to duſt, if they were not thus renewed, and ſtrengthened. 4. If Death were only the effect of Sin, and the Devil were called a Murderer from the beginning, becauſe of his tempting our firſt parents to eat of the forbidden Fruit, it will follow, that ſince Chriſt came to take away the ſins of the World,

and to deſtroy the works of the Devil, that he alſo took away the wages of ſin, which is Death; than which nothing is more contrary to daily experience. 5. Immortality ſeems to be entailed only to the ſtate of future Glory, *where Corruption ſhall put on Incorruption, and Mortality ſhall be ſwallowed up in life:* and *then there ſhall be no more death*, *Rev.* 21. 4. Theſe are the moſt material reaſons I can find for the proof of this opinion, in anſwer to which I ſhall deſire the Five following conſiderations may be weighed.

*Conſid.* 1. It is not to be doubted that the eternal wiſdom, furniſhed our firſt parents with all theſe accompliſhments their ſpecifick nature could ſuffer: the ſignatures of Wiſdom and Goodneſs were legible in the loweſt and leaſt regarded piece of rhe creation; but in Man in a more eminent manner conſpicuous. It is almoſt impoſſible

ble for us in this fallen ſtate, to conceive what thoſe endowments were, with which his innocent condition was bleſſed. We have no reaſon to think that there was any jar or diſagreement amongſt his faculties, or oppoſition and fight of one quality with another. It was mans diſobedience that diſturbed the whole univerſe, and diſordered every part of it; while he was at peace with his Maker, he enjoyed a ſerene condition, and needed not fear any hurt either External or Internal: then all the parts of his Body entertained a ſweet harmony, and there could be nothing except Sin that ſhould have made any failure in his conſtitution, or made a ſeparation between his Soul and Body. But Sin having entred the World, every part of the univerſe changed its face; and Man, who was Heavens favorite in his firſt mould, is now condemned *to eat his bread in the ſweat of his*

*face till he return unto the dust.* This is all that we can learn from Revelation concerning the introduction of Death; to ſuppoſe any other account of it, were to give up our ſelves to the dictates of our extravagant fancies: and farther, it is very unreaſonable to infer mans mortality from his conſtitution, and becauſe he is earthly; unleſs we think it alſo rational, that perfected Bodies, in the ſtate of Glory are not Bodies, or that they are even there mortal; Both which ſeem to be plainly oppoſite to Scripture.

*Conſid.* 2. The Phraſe Immortal, may fall under a double notion: for *Firſt*, ſometimes it is taken abſolutely, implying a being moſt perfect, which had no begining, and can have no end; and in this ſenſe, Immortality is ſolely the prerogative of our Maker, and can never be attributed to any creature. *Secondly*, Sometimes it

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is taken Conditionally: and ſo under various conſiderations it may be attributed either, *Firſt*, To perfected Saints who are ſtated in Glory, where the primitive Image loſt by mans fall, is renewed and perfected; and of thoſe our Saviour in the Goſpel of *Luke* tells us, *that they can dye no more*, *Luke* 20. 36. or *Secondly*, to our firſt parents in the State of Innocency. For ſo long as they remained obedient to the Laws of Heaven, Immortality was entailed upon their nature: for the tenor of the primitive threatning is, *in the day thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt dye*: where temporal Death ſeems to be threatned, which had been idle and vain if men had died, although they had never eaten the forbidden Fruit. I know ſome men think that Sin only laid a neceſſary obligation upon men to obey; and provoked God to remove that Supernatural and Superadded qua-

lity and gift; which preſerved them from Death. With ſuch ſort of men I have no great quarrel, although I think thar God could as eaſily have made mans conſtitution ſo laſting, and the conſtituent parts of his fabrick ſo harmonious, that he ſhould have never dyed if he had not ſinned, as to creat a ſuperadded being to preſerve him ſafe. For reaſon would plead, that that ſuperadded gift required another, and ſo *in infinitum.*

But farther, 'tis very unreaſonable to infer mans corruption from that precept, *be fruitful and multiply*: for although in ſome ſenſe *generatio unius eſt alterius corruptio*, yet the ſtate of being, even ſince the fall, (to which that axiom has only reſpect) is not ſo brittle, as that the production of the Child infers the deſtruction of the parent.

Neither doth that curious query concerniug the place for that ſuppoſed

poſed numerous off-ſpring, carry with it more reaſon; for *Firſt*, It is nor to be doubted, but the wiſe Creator who gave being to Man knew well enough how to provide an Habitation for his off-ſpring. *Secondly*, the Precepts *be Fruitful and Multiply*, carries with it a Limitation, *and repleniſh the Earth*; ſo that we can never well conclude from it, that Generation ſhould have continued after the repleniſhing of the Earth. But *Thirdly*, What ſuppoſe this little Map of Earth had not been able to contain ſo numerous an off-ſpring, could not God have Tranſlated Man after he had lived ſome ſpace upon the Earth to ſome better Habitation, as he did with *Enoch* and *Elijah*?

*Conſid.* 3, Though Man in the ſtate of Innocency ſtood in need of Meat and Drink, yet his nutriment was not noxious and hurtful to him, as now it is. It was for

for Mans disobedience that a Curse was upon the ground, before which there was no fear of hurt from the Fruit of the Trees, and the Herbs of the Field: (which were the only things granted to Men for Food in that state.) And indeed if we but consider that even in this fallen state, there is a huge difference between the Lives of those who live upon wholsome Food, and observe a moderate Diet; and of those who are careless in their Diet, and feed upon Husks; we cannot but think the former Consideration reasonable, especially since that blessed state excluded all manner of excess.

*Consid.* 4. Great and Manifold are the blessed benefits that are conferred upon Mankind, upon the account of his Redeemer: now Man, who was at odds with his Maker upon the account of his Rebellion, is again taken into favor; and the disobedient World

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is reconciled unto God. And although the being of ſin is not quite aboliſhed, yet the Curſe is removed; and Death is not properly now a puniſhment.

*Conſid.* 5. Immortality conjoyned with a ſtate of perfect felicity, is reſerved for Heavens favourites: In the ſtate of Innocency our firſt Parents were liable to Death if they rebelled, but the Saints above are confirmed in their Bleſſed ſtate: atd as our Lord Chriſt tells us, *they can dye no more*. But this much may ſuffice for the removing the former doubts.

The *Third* thing I premiſe is, that 'tis very uſual in Scripture, as it is in all Languages, to put the Whole ſometimes for the Part: thus Man is ſaid to dye, to ceaſe to be Mortal, becauſe the Boby is liable to Corruption, and not that the whole Man, or all the Eſſential conſtituent parts ceaſe. And thus when we diſpute con-

concerning the Period of every Mans Life, we muſt not fooliſhly fancy that a Period is ut to the being of the Soul, but only that its union with the body is diſſolved: otherwiſe a diſmal ſtroke would be given to our Religion, and what would become of the vertuous? I confeſs it is very hard and difficult, to demonſtrate the Immortality of our Souls by natural reaſon: 'Tis true, by reaſon I may prove that our Natures are ſpiritual, and that we elicite acts which are beyond the power of matter; but yet we could never be fully aſcertained thar there is a Life after this, if Revelation had not plainly diſcovered it. The Heathen Philoſophers very wiſely entertained ſome hopes of a Life after this; upon moral arguments taken from the goodneſs of God, and his juſtice in diſtributing Rewards and Puniſhments: but alas how doudtful

full were their hopes, and with how much hesitation did they discourse of it! But by the help of Revelation, these doubts are fully temoved, and we now know that there is a Resurrection from the dead, and that the Souls of Believers at death go immediately into glory.

*Fourthly*, Because the explication of terms is very necessary for the unfolding of doubts; I shall consider the twofold notion and acception the period of Humane Life is lyable to. 1. Sometimes it is taken in a large sense, for that common and ordinary Period which the Author of our natures hath setled, which Men by the common course of nature arrive at: Now many learned Men upon good grounds think that this is the determined bounds mentioned in Scripture. 2, Sometimes it is taken for the last moment of every Mans Life at whatever

ever time it happeneth; whether 1. In the Beginning of Mans days; or 2. In the midſt of his days. Thus the Pſalmiſt prays, that *God would not cut him off in the midſt of his days*. Or 3. When Men come to be of a good old Age and full of years, as it is ſaid of *Abraham, he died in a good Old Age, an Old Man and full of years*, *Gen.* 25. 8.

That there is ſuch a Common Period of Humane Life ſeems to be certain and indubitable: we evidently enough perceive that Men in the Age and place wherein we live, exceed not (unleſs rarely) the bounds fixed upon, *Pſal.* 90. 10. *The days of our years are Threeſcore years and Ten, and if by reaſon of more ſtrength they be Fourſcore years*, &c. And if we ſhall deſcend to the Conſideration of other Animals and Vegetables, we will find it true enough that the individuals of every ſpecifick

nature,

nature, have a common Period which doth not ſenſibly alter; but where there is a manifeſt difference of the climate, temperature, and ſoil. Again, it is very unqueſtionable that this Common Period hath not been equally extended in all Ages and places. 'Tis true for many hundred years by-paſt it hath ſuffered very little alteration, but ſure from the beginning it was not ſo; nor can we upon any good ground be aſcertained that it will continue the ſame that it is now, till the end of all fleſh come. Though I will not poſitively affirm, that Mens Lives will be inſenſibly ſhortened, till they become uncapable for procreation.

But to determine what hath been the common period of Humane Life in by-paſt ages of the World, is a *Theme* very difficult and hard: for 1. Although from *Abrahams* time till this preſent Age it hath altered but little or nothing,

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as we may collect from *Gen.* 15. 13. and 16. where a generation is equalled to an Hundred years (as the Vetſes collated make it evident;) yet before the Flood, and in ſome few Ages following it, this common Term was not concluded within the ſhort bounds it is now; although then it was indeed exceedingly mutable. Before the fatal Flood we read not of any who lived not above ſeven Hundred years, (unleſs *Abel* who was murdered, and *Enoch* whom God took to himſelf:) nor of any who exceeded nine Hundred ſixty and nine years. Now the common Period not being ſo denominated from ſome few particular inſtances, but from what happens to the moſt of Mankind in every Age who dye a natural death, we may ſuppoſe that Eight Hundred years was the common Period before the Flood. But then after the Flood, the mutability of this com-

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mon Poriod is conſpicuous; for in the next age after the Flood, it was cut ſhort two hundred years; and in the next three ſucceeding generations it was abridged to four hundred years; and in the three ſucceeding ages to the former it was reduced to two hundred years; and in *Abrahams* time it ſeems not to have been extended to an hundred years.

In reducing the Life of Mankind into ſhorter bounds now than it was in the infancy of the World, the Divine wiſdom and goodneſs do very plainly appear: for 1. Although it is true that Sin was the cauſe of Miſery, yet it is manifeſt that as Men began to multiply, ſo they became more corrupted; and as the Earth was repleniſhed with Men, ſo with multiplyed Miſeries; and thoſe not only particular, but common. War and bloodſhed, ſlavery and toil, pains and diſeaſes, were in the firſt ages of the World

very rare and ſingular; now theſe are ordinary and common: and is it not then a great mercy that the days of our life are few, ſince ſo full of evils? But 2. If Men lived as long now as in the firſt-ages of the World, a Land would not be able to contain its inhabitants: and this is a far greater inconvenience and diſadvantage, than the ſhortening the leaſe of our beings can be ſuppoſed to be. In the firſt ages of the World, the lives of Men were extended, that the earth might be repleniſhed; and it is very plain, that this common Period was ſhortened according as Man multiplyed. I confeſs God threatens to deſtroy the inhabitants of a Land for their tranſgreſſions; it was becauſe Men had corrupted themſelves, that God brought a Flood of waters upon the World: and yet the Divine Juſtice was accompanied with aſtoniſhing goodneſs; for he did not

not ( as juſtly he might have ) inſtantly cut off that perverſe generation, but he gave them the ſpace of an Hundred and Twenty years to repent. *Yet* ( ſaith God ( *his days ſhall be an Hundred and Twenty years*, *Gen.* 6. 3. That is, although this be a perverſe and corrupt generation, yet becauſe Man is but fleſh, I will give him this time to repent of his wickedneſs; and if notwithſtanding he will not after ſuch warning mend his manners, I will deſtroy him. I know many learned Men think that God here only threatens to ſhorten the common Period of Mens lives, and that it ſhould be contracted within the bounds of an Hundred and twenty years: but this expoſition is not agreeable to the experiences of ſome ages next following the Flood, in which Men lived much longer than an Hundred and Twenty years.

But they ſay, God uſes not to anticipate his time in bringing judgments upon a nation or people: to which I naſwer, it is very true; but methinks men have no ground to think, that in the preſent caſe God anticipates the time in bringing judgements upon them; for we cannot think that *Noah* was compleat five Hundred years old, when God threatned to diſtroy the World. And indeed any Man who is but a little acquainted with the Jewiſh cuſtom of reckoning of years, knows how uſual it is with them, to name the greater part of any thing for the whole. *St. Auſtin* is ſo clear in this, I'le rather ſet it down in his words than my own: *Intelligendum eſt hoc Deum dixiſſe, cum circa finem quingentorum annorum eſſet* Noah, i. e. *quadragintos octoginta vitæ annos ageret, quos more ſuo Scriptura quingentos vocat; nomine totius maximam partem plerumque ſignifi-*

*ſignificans.* Aug. de Civ. Dei, lib. 15. c. 24.

Thus much I have ſpoken of the common Period of Humane Life, in reſpect of the ages of the World. I ſhall now add a little concerning its changeableneſs, in reſpect of places: and I confeſs in this caſe it is ſo variable, that it is a hard matter to pitch upon particulars; only in the general it is certain, that this common Period is not the ſame in all places: in a temperate Climate this common term is extended; but where there is an exceſs of heat, or an unconſtancy of the weather in thoſe places this common Period is ſhortned.

But paſſing this, I come now to conſider the particular Period of every mans life: there be two ways it is commonly taken. 1. As it implies the diſunion of the parts, by reaſon of the exceſs of ſome one quality or other: or 2.

as it implies the Period of Humane Life whatever way it is occaſioned, without any relation either to the defect, or exceſs of any quality: and thus the learned *Epiſcopius* ſtates the caſe in his firſt Epiſtle to *Jo. Beverovicius*. But to make this yet more plain, I ſhall conſider that text, 1. *Sam.* 26.10 *As the Lord liveth the Lord ſhall ſmite him, or his day ſhall come to dye, or he ſhall deſcend into battel and periſh.* Though *David* was anointed King, yet he durſt not ſtretch forth his hand againſt the Lords anointed; neither would he permit *Abiſhai.* (who inconſideratly offered (to do it; knowing none could do ſo and be guiltleſs. Therefore he comforts and ſolaces himſelf with this conſideration, that God ſhould rid him of *Saul* one of theſe three ways: 1. By *ſmiting him* with ſome diſeaſe; and now to what a numberleſs number of diſeaſes are our frail

frail natures incident? variety of maladies prey upon frail man, and millions of miseries attend him; *the Pestilence walketh at noon-day*, and the Air which he breaths may blow out the spark of his life. 2. *Or his day will come*; that is, or he will dye a natural Death; now *Saul* was well-stricken in years, and he knew that by the course of nature he could not live long. 3. *Or he shall descend into battel & perish*: That is, if some disease cut him not off, or if his day come not, yet he shall be exposed to a violent Death, *or he shall descend into battel.* Sometime a violent Death is purely casual; thus it was with *those eighteen upon whom the Tower in* Siloam *fell*, *Luke* 13.4 Sometimes it is only improperly casual, as when one of two equally exposed to danger is only killed: and sometimes it is only and properly violent, such was *Sauls* death, such was *Achitophels* and *Hamans*.

The way to this diſcourſe in hand being thus far cleared, I ſhall now proſecute the deſign of it in this method. 1. I ſhall ſet down thoſe erroneous opinion into which ſome men have unhappily fallen in their enquiry for ſatiſfaction in the preſent caſe. 2. I ſhall lay down the two common opinions that offer faireſt for ſolving this doubt. 3. I ſhall attempt a full and ſatisfactory anſwer: and laſtly, I ſhall conclnde with ſome reflections upon the whole diſcourſe.

I begin with the firſt to give an account of thoſe erroneus ſentiments ſome men have unhappily embraced in their enquiry for ſatiſfaction in this matter. And that I may ſhun tediouſneſs, I ſhall reduce them to the two following heads; 1. Some have fooliſhly imagined that the Period of Humane Life is fatal and neceſſary. 2. Others upon the contrary extream

tream, have as groundleſly thought that it is altogether fortuitous and caſual.

Amongſt thoſe who aſcribe every thing to the diſpenſation of a ſure and inevitable deſtiny, the *Stoicks* have been always reckoned the chiefeſt combatants. It is well known that thoſe ſtupid and ſenſeleſs Philoſophers did teach, that all effects were neceſſarily produced by the natural order and *ſeries* of cauſes, which were from the outgoings of Eternity inſeparably chained together; ſo that neither Humane induſtry, nor the Divine power could alter what ſuch a conjunction of cauſes was to produce.

That Humane Induſtry, care, and good menagery, cannot alter the decree of Fate, the *Stoick* moraliſt *Seneca* very fairly confeſſeth.

*Fatis*

*Fatis agimur, cedite fatis:*
*Non ſolicitæ poſſunt curæ*
*Mutare rati ſtamina fuſi.*
*Seneca in Oedip.*

The ſame *Seneca* alſo affirms that the ſupreme being is ſo ſtrictly tyed to the *Sempeternal ſeries* and order of Cauſes, that he muſt follow, but cannot gain-ſay what is thus eſtabliſhed. *Quicquid eſt quod nos ſic vivere juſſit, ſic mori, eadem neceſſitate deos alligat, irrevocabilis humana ac Divina pariter curſus vehit.* Sen. lib. de provid. 5.

There are two very dangerous Authors of great name and fame, who amongſt many other bad opinions, have recalled this Stoical Dream, which was long ſince rejected, the one is the Famous Mr. *Hobs*; the other the ſubtil Author of that Book, entituled *Tractatus Theologico policitus:* Both which I may perhaps have occaſion

ſion to examine more particularly.

But if all things were thus eſtabliſhed by a fatal neceſſity, ſound reaſon would ſuggeſt to ſober Men, that it were a needleſs thing for the Sick to call for the Phyſitians aid. And iudeed *Cicer* o very ingeniouſly confeſſeth this: *Si fatum tibi eſt ex hoc morbo convaleſceri, ſive tu medicum adhibueris, ſive non adhibueris, convaleſces.--Si fatum tibi eſt non convaleſces, ſive medicum adhibueris, ſive non convaleſces, & alterutrum fatum eſt, medicum ergo adhibere nihil valet.* Cic. lib. de fato. And although *Seneca* thinks he has fallen upon a very good anſwer, yet it is truly never a whit better. *Cum ſanitas* (inquit) *videatur de fato debetur & medica, quia ad nos beneficium fati per hujus manus venit*, lib. 2. nat. cap. 35. By which means the Phyſitian is as fatally determined to preſcribe the Cure, as the Sick

Sick Mans recovery is Deſtinated.

The Ages in which theſe Men lived being dark and blind, we ought as much to pity their caſe, as correct and reprehend them. It is our happineſs that we are not left to the conduct of natural reaſon; and would God our thankful acknowledgments were anſwerable to the greatneſs of this Bleſſing. I ſhall not need to ſtand in rejecting this Dream, I think the hazards this ſpeculation hath expoſed ſome of its favourites to, will be forcible enough to affright others from embracing it. I remember I have read of ſome whom this conceit had ſo far diſtracted, that they did caſt away their Swords and other weapons when their Enemies approached: Saying, If it be our Fate to dye, to keep our Weapons will never preſerve us from Death. 'Tis alſo reported of the deluded *Ma-*

*humetans*

*humetans*, that in Battel they take courage from this, that they are no ſooner Born, than Fate Seals upon their Foreheads, how long they ſhall Live, and what death they ſhall dye. Alas who would not pitty Men thus infatuated aud bewitched! Surely, as St. *Auguſtin* excellently ſpeaks, *Si cor tuum non eſſet fatuum, non crederes fatum*, Tract. 37. in Joh.

*Next* the *Stoick* ſtand the Star-gazers and Aſtrologers, who attribute the ſhortneſs or extenſion of our Lives to the bad or benign Aſpect and Conjunction of the Stars in the time of our Nativity. Now although I deny not that the Heavens have an influence upon inferior things, yet ſurely this ſecret and occult dominion Star-gazers plead for, is ſo manifeſtly croſs to reaſon and dayly experiences, that no man in his wit will affirm it. The Prophet hath long ſince adviſed us, *not to be diſmayed at the*

*ſigns*

*ſigns of Heaven*; adding, the *Heathens they are diſmayed at them*, *Jer.* 10. 2. As if it had been only peculiar to the Heathen part of the World, who were ignorant of Gods Providence, to believe the vain predictons of Aſtrologers. *Babylon* was upbraided for her truſting Aſtrologers, Star-gazers, and monthly Prognoſticators. *Iſa.* 47. 13. Theſe Men confidently preſumed to foretell the time of Mens Death, and the eaſily deceived multitude gave a ready aſſent to whatever they ſpake: So eaſily a matter it is to impoſe any thing upon the belief of the vulgar. The *Palmaſter* as fooliſhly pretendeth, that God hath ſealed upon every Mans Hand how long he ſhall live, and that obſerving men (as they would have us believe they are) can underſtand this by the lines and draughts in the palm of the hand. And for proof of this they aledg, *Job* 37. 7. Where

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it is ſaid, *he ſealeth up the hand of every Man, that all Men may know his work.* But from this place no ſuch thing can be collected: for *Elihu* is there taken up in expreſſing the greatneſs of Gods works, and the Divine power in commanding the Snow and the Rain, ſmall and great, to be on the Earth; and he addeth, *he ſealeth up the hand of every Man.* That is, when Snow and Rain are upon the Earth, Men cannot labor and toil; their hand is ſealed up, they cannot work.

*Epicurus* and his followers could never be reconciled to this opinion, but yet the acount they give of this matter is every whit as extravagant and irrational: they being equally unhappy in the account they give of the beginning and Period of Beings.

The account theſe Men give of the original of Beings is ſo incredible, that no rational Man can have any

any temptation to believe it; but this belongs not to the preſent diſcourſe. I ſhall therefore only conſider what they ſay of the Period of Beings; and briefly their opinion is, that it is no more but the caſual and fortuitous ſeparation of thoſe particles of Matter that were united by a happy chance and hit.

This error is of an Old Date, and had long ere now paſt preſcription, if it had not been ſo ſuitable to the humors of bad Men. The *Saducees*, whoſe Religion it was to contradict the *Phariſees*, were very great ſticklers for this Dream: Some Men have confined the Divine providence to the Stars, and plucked out ſublunary Beings from his immediate Rule and Dominion. *Cicero* could not be perſwaded that God had any knowledg of things contingently future. Some to mend the matter, confeſs God may know the

*gene-*

*general kinds* of things, but they will not allow that he knows every particular. For this they think is inconſiſtent with the immutability of the Deity: But others have been more illiberal in their conceſſions, thinking it enough if they grant that God hath a care of Mankind, although he never regard leſſer matters: and that,

*Curat magna Deus, fortunæ parva relinquit.*

By means of theſe wild conceits this Error has proceeded from bad to worſe, yet very few of the old Philoſophers, or any other rank of men; (Atheiſts thoſe Anomalus births excepted) had ever that confidence in impiety, to ſay with the *Epicureans*, that the World is perfectly left to its own fortuitous and caſual reſolutions, or that I may expreſs it in their Poets own phraſe.

*Sive nihil poſitum eſt, ſed ſors incerta vagatur,*
*Fertque refertque vices, & habent mortalia caſum.*

That the Period of every mans life is not ſo caſual and fortuitous as theſe men imagine, may be made evident by clear teſtimonies from Scripture concerning the particular Providence whereby God takes care of every particular thing in the World. But becauſe I will have occaſion to conſider this afterwards, I ſhall now add only an inſtance or two from Scripture, whereby it may appear that the moſt ſeemingly caſual Periods of men are ordered by an infinite Wiſdom, and fall under the Divinite Rule and Dominion. And firſt the man-ſlayer, who killeth his Neighbor unawars, ſeems to be as caſual a buſineſs as can be: and yet we may read how far

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the Divine providence is concerned in this particular, *Exod.* 21. 13. But farther, one of *Epicurus* Disciples would readily conclude that *Ahabs* death was a piece of chance, and governed by no Supreme power. It was but an Archer's drawing his Bow at a venture, which by chance killed *Ahab*. But the word of truth informs us, that by this means the prophecy 1 *Kings*, 21. 19. was fulfilled: and that it came not to pass without the Divine providence, who rules among the children of Men.

And now I have done with the two erroneous extreams which some men have inconsideratly run to for shelter: the next thing I premised was to lay down the two common opinions that offer fair for removing the difficulty; but I must say (for the thing is palpable,) that I am now only to give the two former rejected opinions of the *Stoicks* and *Epicureans*

dreſſed up in better apparel, and much refined from the impure dregs of Heatheniſm: as,

1. Some run to the abſolute and inconditionate Decrees of God, and tell us, that from the out-goings of Eternity, previous to the Divine conſideration of circumſtances in which men are to be placed, God has ſo abſolutely determined the period of every mans life, that it can neither be lengthned nor extended by care and diligence; nor ſhortned by intemperance, Sword or Plague.

2. Others who ſee the inconveniences and abſurdities that follow upon the granting that opinion to be true, are induc'd to believe that the Period of every mans life is ordinarily mutable; and may be both extended and ſhortened: yet ſtill they grant that God may, as it ſeems good to him, either extend or ſhorten it.

There are four very conſiderable particulars that ſeem to ſtrengthen the firſt opinion. *Firſt*, There are many plain places of Scripture that conclude the days of every man to be bounded by the Divine determination. *Secondly*, There are many examples in Scripture which ſhew that the Period of every mans Life is from the out-goings of Eternity, ſet and bounded in by the Divine will. *Thirdly*, It is a common opinion that the futurition of all things depends upon the Divine will, antecedently to which, things are only poſſible: and therfore, *Fourthly*, we can never give a rational and ſatisfying account, how the Divine knowledg concerning the Period of Humane Life is infallible and certain, if it be not founded upon the *Baſis* of the ſure abſolute Decree.

Upon the other hand thoſe who plead for the mutability of the

Period of every Mans Life, endeavor to remove the fore-named doubt, and to ſhew the great inconveniences it is lyable to: That it quite evacuates the uſe of the means, and encourages men to expoſe themſelves to any danger; *&c.* as I ſhall endeavor to make appear afterwards.

And now I come to the chief thing I aimed at in this undertaking. *viz.* To attempt a ſatisfying anſwer of the preſent doubt, in the proſecution of which intendment I ſhall obſerve this Method. *Firſt*, I ſhall endeavor to ſhew how the Period of every Mans Life may be ſaid ro be determined. *Secondly*, I ſhall ſhew in what ſenſe it is not determined: and *Thirdly*, how it is mutable, and may be extended or ſhortned. I begin with the firſt, how the Period of every Mans Life may be ſaid to be determined: and I ſhall endeavor to do this in the two following particulars.

1. The

1. The Period of every mans Life is ſo far determined that it is not without a Period. To determine, ſignifieth properly to ſet bounds or limits to any thing. Now ſince *it is appointed for all men once to dye*, every mans life is encloſed & bounded within a certain number of years. And I muſt add, that if I be not very much miſtaken, this is the genuin ſenſe of the moſt, if not of all, thoſe places of Scripture that expreſs the determination of Mans days: and indeed *Jobs* words, *ſeeing his days are determined*, &c. ſeem to mean no other thing but this; and in this ſenſe it is unqueſtionable that God has *appointed our bounds which we cannot paſs.*

But 2. the Period of every particular Mans Life is determined in reſpect of the Divine preſcience. Now becauſe this is a very conſiderable particular, and, as I told in the explaining of the text, that

which was intended by *Job* when he ſays, *the number of his months is with thee*; I ſhall therefore endeavor to make out this truth by the plaineſt and moſt convincing evidence that can be.

In order to this I ſhall ſhew that God hath a perfect comprehe ſion of all things, paſt, preſent, or to come; and by conſequence fore-knows the Period of every Mans Life. *Secondly*, I ſhall prove this by plain evidence from Scriptural Examples. *Thirdly*, I ſhall make it appear, that it is ſolely the prerogative of our Maker to know the Period of every Mans Life. And *Laſtly*, I ſhall anſwer the moſt Material objections and doubts that are brought againſt it. *Firſt*, that God hath a perfect comprehenſion of all things paſt, preſent, and to come, is ſo reaſonable a principle of natural Religion, that it hath been generally owned

owned by the wiſeſt and moſt learned Heathen. And thoſe impious wretches who at every turn take the name of God in vain, in atteſting him in the truth of what ſometimes themſelves know is falſe, ſufficiently imply that they believe Gods Infinite knowledg. Beſides the truth of this is plainly held out in Scripture; it was to this City of refuge *Peter* did flee when his love was ſeemingly called in queſtion; *Lord* (ſays he) *Thou knoweſt all things*, *John* 21. 16. And the Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* makes uſe of this Topick to induce us to circumſpection, *all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do*, *Heb.* 4. 13. and God himſelf appeals to the infinity of his knowledg in the demonſtration of his Deity, and challengeth the Idol-Gods *to produce their cauſe; and ſhew what ſhall happen that the latter end of things*

*may*

*may be known, Iſa.* 41. 21. 22. The Pſalmiſt upbraids the Idol-Gods, in that they have eyes and ſee not: but he always comforts himſelf with this conſiderarion, that the God in whom he truſts does behold his condition; all which inſtances make it undoubtable that God hath an infinite cognizance, and that nothing can be hid from his eyes, who equally beholds things paſt, preſent, and to come.

Now if it be ſo plain and evident that God hath ſuch an Infinite knowledg, no Man can reaſonably doubt that God knows the Period of every Mans Life; but if any ſhall ask how is it that God knows certainly the Period of Humane Life, I anſwer, that it is a very bold and fruitleſs enquiry, which concerns not us to know; his underſtanding is infinite, and ſhall ſilly Man think to comprehend and meaſure it by his finite know-

knowledg? The Pſalmiſt modeſtly acknowledgeth that *ſuch knowledg is too wonderful for him, it is high* (ſays he) *I cannot attain unto it*, *Pſal.* 139.6. And elſewhere he tells us, it is only bold Atheiſts who ask, *How doth God know, and is there knowledg in the moſt high?*

I confeſs the Schoolmen (as they are called) weary themſelves with ſuch vain Diſputes, and they are as peremptory in determining the manner of Gods knowledg of future things, as if they had proved their aſſertions with Mathematical demonſtrations. Some of them tell us, that things future are really preſent with God in Eternity; which methinks is a very noble Paradox. Others run to the Divine decree, and make it the *Baſis* of the Divine knowledg. Others tell us hat God in contemplating his own eſſence ſees all the repreſentations and *Ideas* of future things; and

& therefore knows them certainly. We might add many other conjectures, but these may let us know how vainly curious such wits are: but that which may satisfie any sober enquirer is this, that God is Infinite in knowledg, and therefore knows certainly the Period of every Mans Life, it being truly future.

The Second thing I premised was to prove that God knows the Period of Humane Life by examples from Scripture. Now I think this will need but little proof, since the predictions concerning the Period of persons are so many and plain; so many Hundred years foretold, & so punctually fulfilled without a failure in a tittle. The death of *Eli*'s Two Sons, *Hophni* and *Phineas* was foretold. 1 *Sam.* 2. 24. And punctually fulfilled, as we may read, *Chap.* 4. 11. both the manner & place of *Jezebels* death was foretold, *& the Dogs shall eat*

Jezebel

Jezebel *in the Portion of* Jezreel, *and there ſhall be none to bury her*,. 2 *King* 9. 10. Which predicti-on was fulfilled without a failure in any circumſtances, as we read in the cloſe of that Chapter. But the moſt remarkable inſtances are thoſe manifold predictions concerning the death of Holy Jeſus: *All the prophets* (as the Apoſtle obſerveth *Act.* 3.) *have foretold that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer*; they have condeſcended upon the manner of his ſuffering, upon the time, and upon the circumſtances relating to it. The Pſalmiſt in a figurative Speech, (a very uſual way of expreſſing things amongſt the Prophets) ſpeaks of his being pierced: ſo doth the Prophet *Zechariah*, *and they ſhall look upon me whom they have pierced*, *Zech.* 12.10. *Daniel* did punctually ſpeak of the time. *And after Threeſcore and Two Weeks ſhall* Meſſiah *be cut off, but not for himſelf*, *Dan.* 9. 26.

But

But farther, God doth not only know the actual, but also the possible bounds of every Mans Life; that is, God doth know that a Period should have been put to the days of many Men, if they had not by their hearty repentance and Devout Prayers prevented its lash. It was King *Hezekia*'s Prayer to God that extended his Life Fifteen years, for the message which God did send to *Hezekiah* was this; *Set thine House in order, for thou shalt dye and not live.* But he having prayed to God gets this return; *I have heard thy Prayer, I have seen thy tears, behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years, Isa.* 38. 5. From which it is plain, that God knew that a Period should have been then put to his days, if his Prayer had not prevented it. It was the people of *Ninevehs* repentance that prevented the threatned judgment that should have put a Period

riod to their lives. Which Method if the old World had obſerved, they had prevented that Fatal Flood in which they were drowned.

*Thirdly*, That it is onely the prerogative of God Almighty to know the Period of every Mans Life, will be eaſily granted. For thoſe who deny Gods univerſal cognizance, will never attribute it to any creature: and thoſe who do acknowledg the infinity of the Divine knowledg, will never ſay it belongs to the creature. The only things that we are to conſider are theſe pretenſions to a foreknowledg of things which the Heathen world bragged of, but this Plea is eaſily removed. For 1. in thoſe dark ages of the World it was an eaſie thing to impoſe upon the faith of the vulgar, who in all ages have been very credulous and apt to be thus deceived. *Secondly*, It is well known that there pre-

pretended predictions were very *enigmatical* and dubious. *Aio te Æacida Romanos vincere posse*, was a Problem, rather than a Prophecy, which might have concluded both ways. *Thirdly*, The most part of their pretended predictions were only guesses and conjectures, which for the most part were false and groundless; yet *Fourthly*, I do not deny but God may for ends known to himself reveal the Period of particular persons, when, and to whom he thinks fit. It is therefore singly the property of God Almighty who grasps all times, and who can never be impeached for giving a wrong divination, to know the Period of every Mans Life.

In the last place I come to consider those Material doubts and objections this principle may be urged with. As 1. It is hardly credible that God doth certainly know the Period of Humane Life,

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it being only contingently future: this objection *Cicero* could not anſwer, therefore being perſwaded that ſome things were contingently future, he thought God could not know ſuch things. But the difficulty is not ſo great as to make us deny God hath perfect knowledg of things contingently future. For 1. The light of nature may teach us that we muſt not reject what is plain, becauſe we cannot comprehend what is obſcure. That there is in man a rational Soul is beyond doubt; and yet how irreconcilable are the opinions of learned men about its original, whether it be by ſeminal production, or by immediate creation. Again the union of Soul and Body is a very myſterious riddle; and the moſt ingenious *hypotheſis* has been confeſſed to be unſatisfactory; and yet no man was ever ſo far infatuated as to deny that in man there is a Soul and

Body. In like manner, what altho Humane Reaſon cannot reconcile the Divine knowledg with the contingency of actions? yet may it not reſt ſatisfi'd with this, that God knows all contingencies, becauſe his underſtanding is infinite. And indeed the predictions in Scripture are ſo remarkable and plain evidences that God knows all things, that now it cannot be reaſonably queſtioned. But ſuppoſe Revelation had taught us nothing of this, yet we might by natural principles know that God is the moſt perfect being that can be imagined, and therefore of Infinite comprehenſion; that he is our Maker, and therefore muſt know all the intrigues of his creatures.

But *Secondly*, the Divine foreknowledg is not the cauſe of things (for otherwiſe criminal actions which do not eſcape his eye, ſhould be cauſed by him who can not tempt any man to ſin) which

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is impoſſible: if God ſhould reveal to me that *Titius* were certainly to do ſuch a thing the next day, my foreknowledg does not neceſſitate *Titius* to do that act: ſo that upon the one hand as the foreknowledg of it hath no influence upon the manner of its production, nor croſſeth the Humane liberty; for the Divine foreknowledg is not the cauſe why things exiſt, but it ſuppoſeth the exiſtence of things: ſo upon the other hand the contingency of the Period of Humane Life does not infer, that it cannot be certainly known by an infinite underſtanding who graſps all things and ſeaſons.

But the great difficulty is, how the Divine foreknowledg can be reconciled with the Divine promiſes, commands, comminations and prohibitions: how it can conſiſt with the Divine wiſdom and Goodneſs, to threaten men with ſhortneſs of life if they con-

tinue wicked and aebellious; and to promiſe length of days if man will obey his commandments, while-as he well knows that the wicked man will continue in his wickedneſs, and be filthy ſtill, and that the vertuous and good man will perſevere in well doing.

I confeſs, this is a very great difficulty, and hath induced many learned men to doubt if God knows things contingently future, not that they would impeach any of the Divine perfections, or derogate from the infinity of his knowledg; but only they think that the nature of things contingently future, is ſuch that they cannot be known; as it is no diminution from Omnipotency, to ſay things impoſſible, or which imply a contradiction, fall not under its object.

But yet ſince Scripture hath ſo clearly revealed to us the Divine foreknowledg of future actions, methinks he is very raſh and inconſi-

conſiderate that doubts it: it is a remarkable ſentence of *Tertullian*'s *Præſcientia Dei tantos habet teſtes, quantos fecit prophetas.* Hence the learned *Epiſcopius* tells us, that his Religion and the reverence he had to the Divine Majeſty would never ſuffer him to admit this argument, which reflected ſo much upon the truth of Divine Predictions.

But I anſwer more particularly, that Gods promiſes and threatnings are ſerious, becauſe although God knows that ſome men who are threatned will continue in their wickedneſs, yet it being in their power to turn from their Sins, and the Divine threatning being an argument which ſhould prevail upon men; no man can doubt but God is ſerious with ſinners in ſuch caſes. If a parent did certainly know that his Son were to commit a criminal act, would any man think that that Parents threatning of

his Son, if he did commit that act, were void of ſincerity. But 2. As God knows that ſome wicked men, notwithſtanding of the ſevereſt threatning, will continue in their ſins: yet 1. He knows that even ſuch obdurate perſons may do otherewiſe, and 2. He knows that many men would have continued in their ſins, if they had not been threatned with puniſhments. We have no reaſon to think that the people of *Ninevie* would have turned unto God if they had never been threatned. Now though God knew that *Ninevie* when threatned would repent, yet ſince he alſo knew that if they had not been threatned they ſhould have continued in their wickedneſs; therefore no man can queſtion the ſeriouſneſs of the Divine threatnings.

And thus I have diſpatched the firſt particular, how the Period of every Mans Life may be ſaid to be determined. I come in the next

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place to enquire in what ſenſe it is not determined. Now becauſe I have already rejected the *Stoical* fate, all that I ſhall ſpeak concerning this head may be comprehended in theſe following particulars: *viz.*

The Period of every Mans Life is not fatally limited and bounded by any abſolute or inconditionate decree of God Almighty. Now becauſe many learned men violently urge, that God hath from the outgoings of Eternity abſolutly decreed the bounds of every Mans Life, without any conſideration of thoſe circumſtances in which they are to be placed; ſo that men, do what they pleaſe, can neither extend nor ſhorten the leaſe of their life: I ſhall therefore endeavor to make this aſſertion plain, and remove thoſe objections that it may ſeem lyable to; and the rather, becauſe in ſuch kind of aſſertions as are beſides the common opinion, men will be ready to ſuſpect ſome ſiniſtrious deſign. That

That the Period of every Mans Life is not Fatally determined by any ſecret inconditional decree, will appear from the arguments we ſhall make uſe of in proving the inability of the Period of every Mans Life. Now I ſhall only conſider thoſe abſurdities and inconveniencies that follow upon the admiſſion of the contrary opinion. As *firſt*, if the Period of Humane Life were Fatally determined, then thoſe wretched miſcreants who with their own hands put a Period to their Lives, may eaſily excuſe themſelves before their Judg: for ſince it is ſuppoſed that they are phyſically predetermined to do ſo, how can it be imagined that they could do otherwiſe? is there any reſiſting of the Divine decree? alas, it was not in their power to help it, and how then can they be condemned for it? It is a known Maxim, *Nemo peccat in eo quod vitare non poteſt*: The

The neceſſity they are placed in, ſeems to excuſe their ſin, but if notwithſtanding we ſhall ſuppoſe that ſuch brutiſh actions are really criminal, we run our ſelves upon another abſurdity, and that is we reflect upon the Divine holineſs and goodneſs; for if God has truly determined thoſe brutiſh actions by a previous, ſecret, and unalterable decree, if he hath before irrevocably determined, and ſo intangled in ſuch a train of cauſes as ſhould neceſſarily make them offer violence to themſelves; how can we vindicate the Divine Sanctity from the blot of being the Author of ſin? Alas, dayly experience ſhews us, how apt Men are to make uſe of this argument for their own vindication, when they do what is criminal; they tell us they were fatally determin'd by an external power in acting them. And with this conſideration they ſolace themſelves, as if they were as innocent as Fools or Mad-Men Be

But let no Man deceive himſelf in arguing ſo fooliſhly, the Apoſtle St. *James*, very forcibly rejects this opinion. *Let no man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed*, Jam. 2. 13, 14. The wiſe Man in his ſenſe, after the certainty of things, concludes his Seventh Chapter of the Book of *Eccleſiaſtes* thus, *Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright: But they have ſought out many inventions.* Pray then let us reject every opinion that teacheth God does neceſſitate Men to ſin, for nothing can be more injurious to God than this. To think to palliat the buſineſs by ſaying God is under no Law, is but a lawleſs and unreaſonable pretext; for the everlaſting rectitude of his ſpotleſs nature,

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is more than any externalLaw:and pray, what can truth and Juſtice do, but what is holy and Juſt? The diſtinction between the act and the pravity of the act, the former of which God determins Man to; but not to the latter, is as vain and frivolous. For the pravity of every wicked act is inſeparable from it. And farther, the Divine commands particularly prohibit the act, and I think upon no other ground, but becauſe the formality of Sin conſiſts in the act it ſelf. It is indeed ſtrange to conſider thoſe Platonick and imaginary notions ſome Men run to: But I think it needleſs to take a particular view of ſuch Dreams.

But as this opinion ſadly reflects upon the holineſs of God, ſo it is highly inconſiſtent with the liberty of Mans Will in the choice of the means. That there is a free principle in Man, is ſo plain, that he who denies this, muſt engage himſelf againſt

gainſt Experience and Reaſon. There is no Man who does wickedly, but he perceives he may do otherwiſe: the ſick man is not conſtrained to neglect the means for his recovery; neither is the Phyſitian forced to preſcribe this and no other remedy: Men act not as Machines, but they have a Free Principle, whereby they may chuſe what they think is beſt and moſt convenient: It's true, the Will, ſince *Adam*'s Fall, is corrupted, and moſtly enclined to that which is evil; but yet the Fall did not deſtroy Man's Freedom, it made no Phyſical change, only the Faculties of the Soul are morally vitiated and corrupted.

But if the Will were Phyſically (as they ſpeak) determined *ad unum*, it were unreaſonable to think that the Sick perſon, who neglects the means, could do otherwiſe. And alas! doth not Experience convince us, that Men of this perſwaſion neglect

lect the uſe of lawful means which God hath appointed, only becauſe they Dream that if God has decreed that they ſhall dye, then it is needleſs to uſe the means; and if God has determined that they ſhall live, whether they uſe or neglect the means, they ſhall live.

But you'l ſay, God doth not only Decree the *End*, but alſo the *Means*. I anſwer, this Plea doth not a whit diminiſh or remove the difficulty, ſince they ſuppoſe that the Means are as abſolutely decreed as the End: which quite deſtroys the liberty of Mans Will, and leaveth no place for any choice.

Thirdly, This opinion leaves no place for praiſe to the Learned Phyſitian, nor for diſpraiſe to the unskilful Empyrick. Firſt, The skilful Phyſitian can claim no praiſe; for although it be grant'd that he hath wiſely conſidered the condition of the Sick, and the nature of the Diſeaſe; though he hath preſcribed apt

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Remedies, and in all things behaved well, yet ſince he did no other thing but what he was determined to do by an external force, who can think he merits any praiſe, If he could have done otherwiſe but would not, then he might in reaſon claim it; but the caſe according to the preſent *Hypotheſis* is quite oppoſite. But, Secondly, neither can we in reaſon blame the unskilful *Quack-Doctor*, who neither knows the nature of the Diſeaſe, nor of thoſe Medicines he preſcribeth. Alas! poor man does no more than what he was forced to do, and he could not do otherwiſe; why then ſhould he be blamed for any failure or miſtake he commits.

Fourthly, The natural and genuine Conſequence of this Doctrine, is, to make men like Fools or Maid-men, expoſe themſelves to any danger: For inſtance, What need we be afraid to run upon any Precipice, if God hath determined the

the Period of every man's life, there is no fear to encounter with any ſeeming danger; men may ſafely enough leap into the fire, or caſt themſelves into the deep, for there is no fear that they ſhall be hurt or periſh, unleſs the Almighty hath determined it; and if this be, they may perſwade themſelves they could not do otherwiſe, for the Decree is unalterable and cannot be repealed.

Nor is this true only in Theory & Speculation, but it may appear to have ſuch bad effects, by the ſad experience of poor deluded Creatures. Alas! do we not hear the Vulgar frequently comfort any who are in trouble with this conſideration, that God hath decreed it ſhould be ſo, if theſe perſons did only mean that God exerciſeth a ſpecial Providence in the world, and ruleth among the Children of men, no body had ever blamed them: but this is not their meaning, for they

they plainly declare by ſuch kind of ſpeech, that all things come to paſs fatally. I have heard ſome wretched Sinners, who had committed great and ſcandalous ſins, excuſe themſelves, by ſaying, they were decreed to do ſo, and God's will muſt be accompliſhed.

It were very eaſie to multiply many Abſurdities which flow from this Doctrine by a natural Conſequence; but theſe few I have named may abundantly ſatisfie every conſidering man, and ſhew him how pernicious and dangerous it is; but before I conclude, I ſhall conſider the four Arguments I mentioned before, which I ſaid, ſeemed to ſtrengthen and confirm this Opinion, as

Firſt, *There are many places of Scripture which ſeem to conclude, That the Period of every Man's Life is determined.* I ſhall mention ſome of the moſt remarkable Texts of Scripture brought to defend this, as firſt

firſt, *Pſal.* 31. 15. *My times are in thy hand, deliver me from the hand of mine Enemies.* From hence ſome draw this unexpected Concluſion, That God hath abſolutely decreed the Period of every Man's Life. Now I think no conſidering man ſhould ever have gueſſed this to be the Pſalmiſt's meaning; for the Text only holds out the Divine care and Providence, whereby he does ſuperintendand continue every individual thing in the world in their Beings, and therefore is it that *David* makes his application to God, that he would deliver him from the hand of his Enemy; which methinks had been a needleſs Petition, if he had imagined that God had abſolutely determined the period of his Life. Secondly, *Pſal.* 39. 5. *Lord, make me to know mine end, & the meaſure of my days what it is, that I may know how frail I am.* This place is ſtrangely brought to confirm the former Opinion: For the

Pſalmiſt doth not deſire the knowledge of the Period of his life; he does not ask when he ſhall die, only he begs the Divine aid and aſſiſtance, that he may wiſely improve the ſhort time he hath to live. I cannot ſtand to conſider ſuch Texts of Scripture as theſe, which are no ways acquainted with the Doctrin they are brought to defend. There is only one Text that ſeems to favor this Opinion, *viz.* Job 14.5. *Seeing his days are determined, the number of his Months are with thee, thou haſt appointed his bonds that he cannot paſs.* But I have conſidered this all along in this Diſcourſe. I confeſs, ſome in return to this ſay, that all *Job's* words are not approved of God, therefore it is hard to conclude any thing from them; but this is a very inſufficient anſwer. That which ſatisfieth me is this, that *Job* here only ſays that our days are determined, but he ſpeaks nothing how they are determi-

termined; now in what ſenſe the Period of every Man's life may be ſaid to be determined, I have already conſidered.

Secondly, *There are many Examples in Scripture, which ſhew that the Period of every Man's Life is bounded and limited by an abſolute Decree.* The moſt remarkable is, that *Act.* 4. 28. *Both* Herod *and* Pontius Pilate, *with the Gentiles & the people of Iſrael were gather'd together for to do whatſoever thy hand & thy counſel determined before to be done:* The Scribes & Phariſees frequently ſtirr'd up the multitude *to lay hands upon Chriſt*, but their endeavours were always to no purpoſe; and the account the Scripture gives for this, is, *becauſe his hour was not come.* In return to this, I ſhall deſire it may be conſidered, that when we ſay the Period of every Man's Life may be extended or ſhortned, the meaning is not, that it is impoſſible that it

can be otherwiſe: we never doubted but the great Governor of the World may make what reſerved Caſes he pleaſes from the ordinary courſe of things; and no wonder though the preſent Caſe, which is upon all accounts ſo extraordinary, be exempt from the general Rule; and for ſuch exempt Caſes, to which there ought to be allowance made, no reaſonable man can think they do any prejudce to the thing I have been proving.

Thirdly, *It is a common opinion, that the futurition of things depend only upon the Divine will; antecedently to which things are only poſſible.* In anſwer to which, I eaſily grant, that there is nothing that comes to paſs contrary to the Divine will; the moſt criminal actions are ordered by his Infinite Wiſdom; and permitted to be. But yet we have no ground to think that he decrees every future action.

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Elſe it were hard to vindicate the holineſs of God; upon which conſideration many Learned Men have been induced to deny Gods immediate concurring with the Creature in all its operations; and yet we need not run our ſelves upon this Rock; for we may ſafely enough maintain that the Divine will is immediately efficatious; for God who created man with a freedom of will, deſigned that he ſhould act without conſtraint, and the reaſon why man acts freely, is becauſe God wills men to act ſo; which plainly diſcovers, that the moſt contingent actions depend immediatly upon the Divine will.

Fourthly, *We can never give a rational nor ſatisfying account how the Divine knowledg concerning the Period of Humane Life is infallible & certain, if it be not founded upon the ſure* Baſis *of an abſolute decree.* This object I have partly removed already, while I ſhewed that

God knows whatſoever is true, becauſe his cogniſance is Infinite; wherefore it is unreaſonable to think that God could not have a perfect comprehenſion of things, if he had not decreed them abſolutely. Now to make this yet more plain, I ſhall prove by inſtances from Scripture, that God hath a certain knowledg of thoſe things which he never decreed: as abſolutely future. And *Firſt*, It is a very remarkable inſtance which we have, 1 *Sam.* 23. 11, 12. where *David* hearing that *Saul* was to come to *Keilah*, he earneſtly beſeecheth God to tell him, if the men of *Keilah* will deliver him and his men into the hand of *Saul*; and if *Saul* will come down. To both which he gets this anſwer, *That Saul will come down*; and that *the Keilites will deliver him up*. And yet the Event ſhews that none of thoſe came to paſs, becauſe the fulfilling of both did depend upon

*David's*

*Davids* ſtaying in *Keilah*. And yet God certainly knew, that if *David* had not depart'd from *Keilah*, they ſhould have delivered him into the hands of *Saul*. And farther it is very evident, that *David* was not inquiring what were the preſent propenſions, and inclinations of the *Keilites*; but what ſhould be the event of his ſtaying, and accordingly he receives an anſwer from God. Another Inſtance we have 2 *Kings* 13. 19. where *Eliſha* the Prophet is very wroth with *Joaſh* King of *Iſrael*, becauſe he did not ſmite upon the ground five or ſix times; and the reaſon the Prophet adds, is *for then hadſt thou ſmitten Syria till thou hadſt conſumed it*. Which makes it as evident as any thing can be, that God foreknew that *Joaſh* ſhould have ſmiten *Syria* till he had conſumed it, if he had ſmitten upon the ground five or ſix times. It were no difficult task to prove this by a multtude of inſtances from

Scripture, but I think I need add no more for the ſatisfaction of conſidering Man; and for others, a Million of demonſtrations will be urged to no purpoſe. And thus I have done with the Second thing I propoſed, that God hath not by any abſolute or inconditionate Decree fatally determined the Period of every Mans Life.

I proceed to the Third thing propoſed, namely, whether the Period of every Mans Life be mutable. And before I prove it to be ſo, I muſt premiſe two cautions. *Firſt*, when we ſay the Period of every Mans Life is mutable, we mean no more but that it may be ſhortned by our intemperance, or neglect of the means; and be extended by our good managery and religious manner of living. *Secondly*, When I ſay the Period of every Mans Life is moveable, the meaning is not that it is neceſſarily ſo, and that it cannot be otherwiſe; for this would

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not be consistent with our dependent condition; therefore there is allowance to be made to extraordinary cases. The acts of Divine providence in the government of Humane affairs, are sometimes extraordinary, and therefore it must be left to his Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, to make what reserved cases he thinks fit from the general rule. Yet for ordinary, the Period of Humane Life is mutable; and God doth not exclude the power of second causes in governing the World.

These things being premised, I doubt not but to offer such argue ments for the proof of the mutability of the Period of every Mans Life, as shall be sufficient for the conviction of any man who is not blinded by prejudice, or prepossess'd with some contrary notion. And

*First*, Upon the observance of the Divine laws, there are many promises in Scripture assuring us of length

length of days; and on the other ſide, there are many threatnings of cutting ſhort the days of the wicked. Thus God promiſes length of days to obedient Children. *Ex.* 20. 12. *Honor thy Father & Mother, that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord thy god giveth thee. Deut.* 4 40. *Thou ſhalt keep therefore his Statutes and his Commandments which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, & with thy Children after thee, & that thou may'ſt prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy god giveth thee*: & particularly the Lord tells *Solomon*, 1 *King.* 3. 4. *If thou wilt walk in my ways to keep my ſtatutes & my Commandments, as thy father* David *did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.* The Pſalmiſt encourageth men to conſider the caſe of the poor upon this Motive. *Pſal.* 42. 1, 2. *Bleſſed is he that conſidereth the Poor, the Lord will preſerve him & keep him alive, &c.* And upo

upon this account the Wiſe-Man alſo perſwadeth men to obſerve and keep Gods laws. *Prov.* 3. 1, 2. *My Son forget not my law, but let thine heart keep my Commandments: for length of days, and long life, and peace ſhall they add to thee.*

How much the obſervance of the duties of Religion conduce to our health, is a thing daily experience atteſts; and therefore the Apoſtle very excellently exhorts *Timothy, to exerciſe himſelf unto Godlineſs, for it is profitable unto all things, having promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come,* 1 Tim. 4. 8. Religon is as a bridle to keep men within due bounds in their eating and drinking; it forbids all manner of exceſs which impares our bodily health, and obliges men to make uſe of lawful means for their preſervation and recovery. If we conſult experience, we ſhall find theſe to be the men who for ordinary enjoy the longeſt lives: it

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is true ſome good men may be naturally of a brittle conſtitution, and others Good may remove for ſecret ends known to himſelf; yet for ordinary, the Godly man, whoſe natural temper is ſtrong, hath the advantage of the wicked man; and certainly Religion in its due tendency preſcribes the beſt rules for long life.

*As Righteouſneſs tendeth to life, ſo he that purſueth evil* (as the Wiſe-Man tells us) *purſueth it to his own death*, Prov. 11. 19. We have a large Catalogue of the Puniſhments inflicted for ſin, *Exod.* 26. Where more particularly *v.* 16. the Lord threatens to *appoint over thoſe who obey not his Laws, terror, conſumption, and the burning ague:* & that Men may not fooliſhly think all theſe are but threatnings which God intends not to inflict upon poor Man, the Prophet *Iſaiah* tells us, *if ye refuſe & rebel, ye ſhall be devoured with the Sword*, for the Mouth

Mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it, *Iſa.* 1. 20. And the wiſe-man concludes it as certain, *Prov.* 10. 27. *The years of the wicked ſhall be ſhortned*: & to conclude, the Pſalmiſt alſo tells us, *bloody and deceitful men ſhall not live out half their days. Pſal.* 55. 23. which the Poet very well expreſſeth.

*Ad Generum Cereris, ſine cæde ac ſanguine pauci,*
*Deſcendunt Reges. & ſicca morte Tyranni.*

And the truth of this may be evident likewiſe from common Experience, by which it will appear, that no men are ſo obnoxious to Diſeaſes as the wicked, who ſpend their time *in chambering and wantonneſs, in riot and exceſs. Who hath woe? Who hath ſorrow? who hath wounds without cauſe? they that tarry long at the wine*, Prov. 23. 29, 30. What the Wiſe-man ſays of one kind of Vice, may be ſaid of all, *They lead down to the Chambers of death,*

*death*, Prov. 7. 27. But these things are so obvious, that I need not to enlarge upon them. I shall conclude this Argument with this consideration, that since God Almighty promises to extend and lengthen out, or prolong their life, who walk piously and observe his Statutes, and theratens to shorten the days of the wicked, who refuse to obey his Laws, it cannot be rationally imagined that the Period of every Man's Life is absolutely determined.

Another Argument to confirm our Assertion, may be taken from the pious & devout prayers of the righteous, and their turning from their sins by an hearty repentance, both which conduce to the lengthening out of their days. I put Repentance and Prayer together, because of their near affinity to one another. Now that both these may be the Moral Cause of extending our Lives, may appear to be true

true from common Experience, beſides the many Aſſertions and Promiſes in Scripture to this purpoſe. Firſt, The truth of this may be evident from Experience, by which it will appear, that if Men had hearkned to *Noah*'s Doctrin, if they had repented of their wickedneſs within the ſpace allowed to them, they had not periſhed in the Deluge of Water. Of repenting *Nineveh* we read, *That God ſaw their works, that they turned from their evil way, & God repented of the evil he had ſaid that he would do unto them, and he did it not*, Jonah 3. 10. It was *Hezekiah*'s Prayers and Tears that prolonged his life. *Go* (ſaith the Lord to his Prophet *Iſaiah*) *and ſay to Hezekiah, Thus ſaith the Lord, the God of David thy Father, I have ſeen thy tears, behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years*, Iſa. 3. 8. 5. And if prayer were of no force, to what purpoſe were men ſo earneſt in their ſickneſs, to

beg

beg the prayers of others on their behalf. I confeſs if the Period of every Mans Life were fatally determined, our Prayers ſhould be very needleſs. For can we be ſo ſenſleſs as to imagin, that our Prayers can move God to change his unalterable Statutes and Decrees.

But beſides common experience, the truth of this is likewiſe atteſted by plain evidences from Scripture. *At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a nation, & concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, & to pull down, and to deſtroy it; If that Nation againſt whom I have pronounce, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a kingdom to plant it; If it do evil in my ſight, that it obey not my voice, then will I repent of the good wherewith I ſaid I would benefit them Jer.* 11.7, 8, 9, 10 Methinks this is ſo plain an evidnce of the efficacy of repentance, that no

no reaſonable man can have any doubt concerning it. But alas! if God had from the outgoings of Eternity fatally determined the deſtruction of Nations and Kingdoms by an abſolute and inconditionate decree, Repentance could never alter the determination.

It is the Apoſtles advice, *Jam.* 5. 14. *Is any ſick among you? let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him.* I know there are other means to be made uſe of in order to the procuring of health than repentance and prayer, and of theſe we ſhall ſpeak anon: but yet this I think may be truly ſaid, that ſometimes, when all other remedies have been either ineffectual or not to be had, repentance and prayer have done the buſineſs, and compleated the cure. And ſurely theſe are duties profitable at all times.

I know the Church of *Rome* tell us many extravagant Stories of the

wonders and miracles that have been performed by the prayers of Holy Men: thoſe I ſhall not now mention, only I ſhall ſay, that although it is not credible that the Prayers of Saints upon the Earth, do either mitigate and alleviate the pains of thoſe that are in Hell; or free them from that miſerable ſtate, (as ſome men have confidently enough reported:) yet it is ſufficiently credible that *the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much*, Jam. 5. 16.

A *Third* Argument to prove that our lives may be extended or ſhortned, may be taken from the uſe of medicaments. Common reaſon will teach Men, that it is needleſs to preſcribe any Medicine to thoſe that are dead; and truly the caſe would be much alike, if the Period of every Mans Life were determined by an inconditionate Decree. For although men might then make uſe of medicaments, yet I think

think I may truly ſay that their operation ſhould be very ineffectual. But that men may to good purpoſe employ the Phyſitian when they are ſick, and expect by the bleſſing of God, benifit by the uſe of Medicaments applied by the art of Phyſick, no reaſonable man can doubt.

That the lives of many have been lengthned and prolonged by the excellent remedies, applied by the expert and skilful Phyſitian, is a truth ſo obvious to common experience, that I need not enlarge upon it. And on the other ſide, how many have died before their time, only by their imploying ignorant Phyſitians! It is a famous inſtance that we have recorded of one *Manes*, the Father of the *Manichees*, who having returned into *Perſia* a t that time when the Kings Son lay ſick of a dangerous diſeaſe, he amongſt many other Phyſitians was preſent: all the others plainly declared that the diſeaſe was

dangerous; but *Manes*, who wa only a pretended Phyſitian, co fidently deſired that they might be all removed, and he would take care of the Kings Son, and withal promiſed to reſtore him to health in a ſhort ſpace; but the event was quite contrary, for within a ſhore time the Kings Son died; which did ſo provoke the King of *Perſia*, that he inſtantly cauſed *Manes* to be put to a miſerable Death. What miſchief has been done by unskilful Phyſitians, to many ſad examples do daily atteſt; but yet if the Period of every Mans Life were determin'd by an abſolute and inconditionate decree, no man could blame the ignorant Phyſitian, nor needs any perſon be troubled if they neglect the means; for God had determined they ſhould do ſo, which indeed makes *Marthas* ſpeech to our Lord Chriſt to be ridiculous, *if thou hadſt been here my Brother had not died.*

That

That *Naaman* the *Syrian* ſhould waſh himſelf in the River of *Jordan* ſeven times, and then be clean of his Leproſie, was indeed miraculous: But yet it is plain, that if he had not done ſo, his Leproſie had remained.

Whether that cuſtom in the primitive Chriſtian Church of anointing the ſick with Oyl was miraculous, or not, I ſhall not diſpute; but this is certain, that it was then a means uſed for the recovery of the Sick.

There is one objection which ſome men very impertinently urge againſt what I have been ſpeaking, and that is, *Aſa* his going to the Phyſitians, which the Scripture ſeems to diſallow. To this I anſwer, that King *Aſa* is not therefore reprehended, becauſe he asked advice of the Phyſitians, but becauſe he truſted only in them, and *ſought not the Lord*: as it is very plain from 2*Chron.* 16. 12. And ſure no reaſona-

ble men will have any doubu but this was a very culpable neglect in *Asa*.

*Fourthly*, Nothing is more evident than that there are several things which have a Physical efficacy in the shortning of Mens lives; as all kinds of excess, namely immoderate eating and drinking; all inordinate passions of mind &c. as also the bad and unwholesome constitution of a Kingdom. And on the other side, there are many things which effectually conduce to the lengthning of our days; namely all kind of moderation and temperance; the wholsomness of the region wherein we live, and our good managery. What kind of persons are those who for ordinary live longest? are they not those who carefully moderate their sensual appetites, and who govern their passions, and who live in the wholesomest places? We commonly say that Men who live in a Populous

pulous City are ſhorter lived than thoſe who live in the Country. I have already ſhewed how ſome vices in their proper tendency ſhorten Mens Lives, and that in ſome Nations and Kingdoms men live much longer than in others: all which methinks plainly tells us the Period of every Mans Life is not Fatal but Mutable, according as men are careful or negligent of themſelves.

I ſhall only ladd another conſiderable argument, and ſo draw this diſcourſe to a concluſion. And that is, don't we evidently perceive that many men had lived longer if they had not wretchedly and unreaſonably expoſed themſelves to danger; and is it not evident that many Millions who have died in battle would have had their days prolonged if they had never deſcended into battle? That God hath from the outgoings of Eternity by an abſolute and inconditionate degree de-

termined both the time and manner of every mans death, this is more than we can learn from Revelation; and methinks it is very inconſiſtent and irreconcilable with thoſe many plain texts that ſhew it is lawful in time of eminent danger to flee for our ſafety, in time of Famine, and when any egregious contagion, ſuch as the Peſtilence, ſpreadeth in any place. How many Hundreds prolonged their lives by their flight from battel? If *David* and his Men had remained in *Keilah* it is certain they ſhould have been delivered up into the hands of *Saul*; and what the Event ſhould have been we may eaſily conjecture, if God by a ſpecial providence had not interpoſed for their ſafety. But beſides the many inſtances we might produce, we have a poſitive precept to flee from any eminent danger, *Mat.* 10. 23. *When they perſecute you in this City, flee into another.* Which plainly ſhews that this

this is a lawful means of prolonging our lives in ſuch caſes. It is a notable inſtance we have, *Jer.* 27.18. *Thus ſaith the Lord, behold I ſet before you the way of life, and the way of death: he that abideth in this City ſhall dye by the Sword, and by the Famine, and by the Peſtilence: but he that goeth out and falleth to the Chaldeans that beſiege you, he ſhall live, and his life ſhall be unto him for a prey.* Which place plainly ſhews, that God had not decreed the Period of their Lives by any inconditionate decree; for the means both of prolonging and of cutting ſhort their Lives, are put in their choice. And this is all that I ſhall ſay to the *Third* thing I propoſed to ſpeak, concerning the mutability of the Period of every Mans Life for ordinary.

All that now remains is to conclude with ſome practical reflections upon what hath been ſaid. And *firſt*, whatever debates there may

may be concerning the Period of every Mans Life, yet there is no doubt but Mans Life hath a Period. *It is appointed for all men once to dye*, and from this warfare there is no diſcharge. Pray what is become of all thoſe who lived in former ages? have they not gone the way of all living? and ſhall we think to ſhun the approach of this laſt Enemy? may not the multiplied experiences we have of other Mens frailty and mortality, convince us that we are brittle, and muſt return to the duſt? we are of the like conſtitution that they were of, and we cannot expect to be otherwiſe dealt with. *What man is he that liveth & ſhall not ſee death?* and yet many men live as unconcerned as if they had the perpetuity of their beings enſured to them, and had *concluded an agreement with Death*, and had *ſecret intelligence with the Grave.*

It is truly a buſineſs worthy to be regrated that men who are living,

ing, as it were in the Houſe of mourning, daily viſited with pains and diſeaſes, and have no promiſe, at leaſt, for one moments ſecurity, yet live unconcerned, and never mind thoſe pleaſures. It was indeed a praiſe worthy and commendable cuſtom amongſt the *Jews*, to build their Sepulchers in their Gardens (as we may gueſs from *Job.* 19. 14.) that ſo in the midſt of their pleaſures, they might behold Monuments of their mortality.

Truly if we did frequently meditate upon our latter end, we ſhould live more like Chriſtians than we now do. The *end* hath a very great influence upon mens endeavors; hence is that general *Maxim*, *Finis ultimus præſcribat regulas totius vitæ.* And it ſeems that the Pſalmiſt upon this account prays, *Lord make me know mine end, and the meaſure of my days, that I may know how frail I am.* It is not to be doubted but

but we ſhould order our converſation aright, If we had this conſideration in our view. We ſhould have but low and contemptible thoughts of the periſhing pleaſures which we now ſo much delight in. Then we ſhould be argued out of our folly in ſpending our years as a tale that is told.

It is threatned a ſad Plague to the oppreſſor, *that the number of his years are hidden from him*, Job. 15. 20. He is a perſon that never conſiders that his appointed time approacheth, and that God will bring him into the Grave, the place appointed for all living: and it is laid down as the cauſe why *Jeruſalem came down wonderfully*, that *ſhe remembred not her laſt end*, Lam. 1. 9. And truly it may be alſo reckoned as the cauſe why Chriſtians live ſo contrary to the commendable rules of the Goſpel they profeſs. If we did but entertain ſome what more familiar

familiar thoughts of our appointed time, we could not but rectify thoſe abuſes we are guilty of. But alas! all the paſſages of our time are filled up with cares about things that periſh: we can walk to the Grave with our friends, whom we once loved as intirely as our own lives, and reap as little advantage by their death as if we had never been acquainted with them, never remembring, *that we muſt go to them, but they cannot return to us.*

But *Secondly*, although the Period of every Mans Life is fixed in reſpect of the Divine foreknowledg, yet to us it is uncertain; we know not when this Enemy may ſurpriſe us. Of this we may ſay what our Lord Chriſt ſaith of the day of judgment, *but of that day and hour we know not.* When we leaſt ſuſpect its approach, it may call us to go hence and be no more. How many millions of ſtrange and unexpected accidents attend us?

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*the Peſtilence walketh in darkneſs, and Deſtruction waſteth at noon-day*, aſtoniſhing diſpenſations may allarm us by night, and the devouring Arrow fleeth by day, *Pſal.* 91. 5, 6. When we go abroad, we cannot promiſe to our ſelves a ſafe return, and at home when we put off our cloths, we cannot tell if we ſhall ever put them on again: the Grave is always ready for us. What ſtrange kind of unknown diſeaſes doth our age produce, from which we cannot promiſe to our ſelves any exemption? We live amongſt cruel and mad Men, and do we know but thoſe Beaſts of prey may devour us? When we look for peace, deſtruction may come. This was the Rich Mans Fate, who while he was promiſing himſelf reſt for many days, *that ſame night his Soul was required of him.* We are always apt to put the thoughts of this day far from us; when

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we enjoy health we never think of any change, and that ſickneſs may ſeize upon us and put a Period to our lives. We live indeed at a great deal of uncertainty; *man alſo knoweth not his time, as the Fiſhes that are taken in an evil Net, and as the Birds that are caught in the ſnare: ſo are the ſons of men ſnared in an evil time, when it falleth ſuddenly upon them*, Eccl. 9. 12. We look upon Death as the unfaithful Servant did upon his Maſters coming, we think Death doth *delay its coming*; but if we were not fools we ſhould always realize the quickneſs of its approach. May be we are young and ſtrong, how many ſuch have been called away in the morning of their age? *Goo too now* (ſaith the Apoſtle *James*) *ye that ſay to day or to morrow we will go into ſuch a City and continue there a year, & buy and ſell and get gain; whereas ye know not what ſhall be on the morrow*, Jam. 4. 13, 14. Alas

our

our days at beſt are but labor and ſorrow, for they are ſoon cut off, and we flee away. When a few years are gone, Wee muſt go the way of all fleſh: and yet upon the happy improvement of this depends our everlaſting hapineſs or miſery; *for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledg, nor wiſdom, in the Grave whither we are going*, Eccl. 9 10.

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# *FINIS.*

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